

NEW MODEL FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP: CASE STUDY OF SOUTH PASADENA  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A Professional Project

presented to

the Faculty of

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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## New Model for Church Leadership: Case Study of South Pasadena Christian Church

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### **Abstract**

South Pasadena Christian Church (SPCC) has made great strides in cultivating a multicultural congregation. Our faith community brings together a cornucopia of cultural celebrations and festive traditions in the united fellowship of six racial-ethnic groups: Chinese, Hispanics, Koreans, Filipinos, Whites and Blacks. To advance our camaraderie, we use translation devices in our main worship service, include multiple languages in our praise songs, translate all written materials, meet for lunch as a church family after every service, and utilize assistant pastors as liaisons to meet and overcome our amalgamated cultural challenges. SPCC has developed into a place where people from all walks of life feel welcome, find fellowship, grow spiritually, and break-bread together. We live into our vision through biblical preaching, intense Bible study, gregarious fellowship, shared meals, and intentional outreach and in reach ministries. We work hard to make our church a place where authentic intercultural relationships are forged and lives are changed. And yet our work is not done, in fact, it has only just begun. Although South Pasadena Christian Church is one of the most culturally diverse churches in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ (DOC), we still have to meet the challenge to give equal voice to all our racial-ethnic groups at the governance level. If we are going to take our faith community to new plateau in intercultural fellowship, we must be willing to develop a culturally diverse leadership team. This important next step will help to insure we are a church where people from all social locations regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, social class, sexual identity, language, nationality, physical ability, or geography can come together in the love of God and truly flourish. To accomplish this end, this project

proposes the creation of a Diversity Syndicate, which is a radical culturally diverse leadership team organized to promote solidarity through intercultural competence education, the development of polity, practices, and worship liturgy that reflect the needs and concerns of our multicultural faith community, and discover innovative ways to pursue our common interests.

In chapter one we look at the history of SPCC and map the path that a mono-cultural church took to become one of the most culturally diverse churches in the Pacific Southwest Region of DOCs. In chapter two we consider how SPCC's philosophy of church leadership is supported by the biblical and theological doctrines that defined the 1st century Christian church. In chapter three we look at how psychoanalytic perspectives of Group Relations Theory can help us understand the pejorative, unconscious defense mechanisms that govern group behavior and determine the dynamics of authority, power, and leadership struggles in the Church. Chapter four gives us an overview of how a pedagogy of love and mutual respect can transform a church when it accords special attention to the Christian praxis of loving your neighbor as yourself. In chapter five we are introduced to a new model of leadership which is distinguished from traditional church leadership models by its focus on intercultural competence education as a means to implement the two Great Commandments. Finally, in chapter six we ponder the palpable implications that the crucible of multicultural leadership taking place at SPCC, and around the country, can have when authentic love and appreciation for our racial-ethnic differences bring us closer in communal relationship.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### The Problem

The city of South Pasadena has one of the fastest growing Asian populations in the San Gabriel county. Over the years, residents have seen a huge influx of immigrants from China, Korea, and the Philippines. The latest statistics indicate that the Asian population is the second largest group in South Pasadena representing 30.0%, just behind Whites at 41.6%, and ahead of Hispanics and Blacks at 19.8% and 2.5% respectively with Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders coming in at 0.1%, followed by American Indians at .05%.<sup>1</sup> Although the original inhabitants of South Pasadena and its surrounding areas were members of the Native American Hahamog-na tribe, a branch of the Tongva Nation who occupied the Los Angeles Basin, on March 2, 1888, the city was incorporated with a white population of slightly over 500 residents, becoming the sixth municipality in Los Angeles County.<sup>2</sup> From this humble beginning, the city of South Pasadena has grown to become one of Los Angeles County's most culturally diverse cities.

The rich cultural diversity blossoming in South Pasadena is indicative of what is happening in the United States at large. According to Diana Eck, author of *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, "The religious landscape of America has changed radically in the past thirty years, but most of us have not yet begun to see the dimensions and scope of that change, so gradual has it been and yet so colossal."<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising that churches in America would also see

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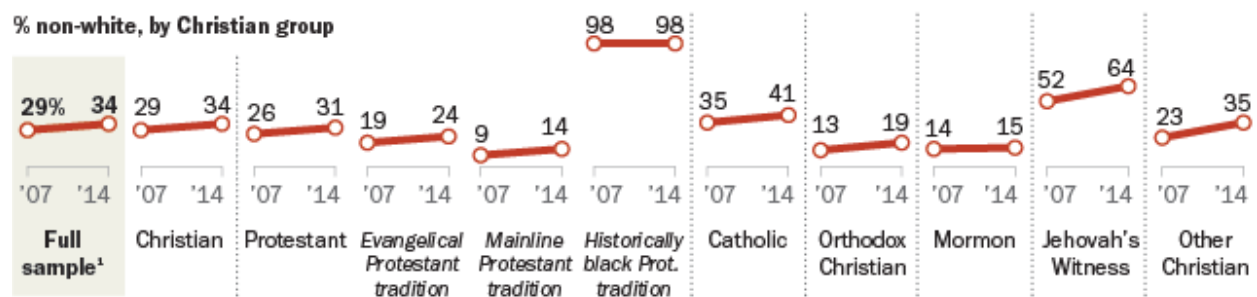
<sup>1</sup> "American Fact Finder," US Census Bureau, accessed January 21, 2018, [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk).

<sup>2</sup> "American Fact Finder."

<sup>3</sup> Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 1.

increasing numbers of immigrant populations. A Pew Research Center study conducted in 2014 showed significant increases in the percentage of non-white populations in Christians denominations throughout America. Surprisingly, among Protestant denominations the only group that has not experienced increasing immigration numbers are the historically black denominations (see chart below).<sup>4</sup>

## Increasing Racial and Ethnic Diversity Within Christianity



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic; the non-white category includes African Americans, Asian Americans, those of other races, those of mixed race and Hispanics. Results recalculated to exclude nonresponse.

<sup>1</sup>The demographic characteristics of the 2014 Religious Landscape Study's overall sample were weighted to known parameters from the Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS), which helps to ensure that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely match those of the U.S. adult population. See Appendix B for details.

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Although acceptance and integration of these new arrivals into the fabric of America, in general, has been slow, it has been even slower in mainline churches. In fact, many churches in the United States have failed to recognize and adapt to the changing demographics in their communities, and as a consequence, they have found themselves unprepared to meet the challenges of this intercultural amalgamation taking place. Undoubtedly this has contributed to the mass decline occurring in churches around the country. As the ethnic-racial mix continues to

<sup>4</sup> "Religious Landscape Study," Pew Research Center, assessed January 21, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.



shift, many churches are discovering that their current membership does not reflect the communities in which they serve. I grew up in a black neighbor and went to a black church that now sits in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. Over the years my home church has continued to decline in membership as blacks move out of the neighborhood and Hispanics move in. Although the neighborhood demographics are rapidly changing, my home church has not adapted to the changes. Instead of finding ways to integrate the new residents in the community, our church leaders continue to focus our outreach efforts and our worship liturgy on a dwindling black population. These short-sighted church practices and the inability to find new ways of doing church are the reasons behind shrinking church populations.

Churches in South Pasadena, like churches in cities around the country, including my home town, will have to develop ways of adapting to and meeting the needs of multicultural congregations. The goal of creating an environment of mutual trust and communal respect for one another is critical to the work of developing the intercultural fellowship that can sustain this burgeoning influx of immigrants. But formidable challenges must be overcome. Michelle LeBaron, author of *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for A Changing World*, points out that, “Since culture is inextricably entwined with conflict, it is essential to understand it—where it comes from, how it works, how it changes, and how it relates to identity and meaning-making.”<sup>5</sup> The solutions that I will propose in this project will not only aid SPCC in making the paradigm shift necessary for developing the atmosphere needed to engage and cultivate a multicultural faith community, but they will also provide ideas for overcoming obstacles and challenges that inhibit intercultural conviviality and strangle church growth such as language barriers, systemic discrimination, one-sided cultural exchanges, unequal access to the leadership

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<sup>5</sup> Michelle LeBaron, *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for A Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 11.

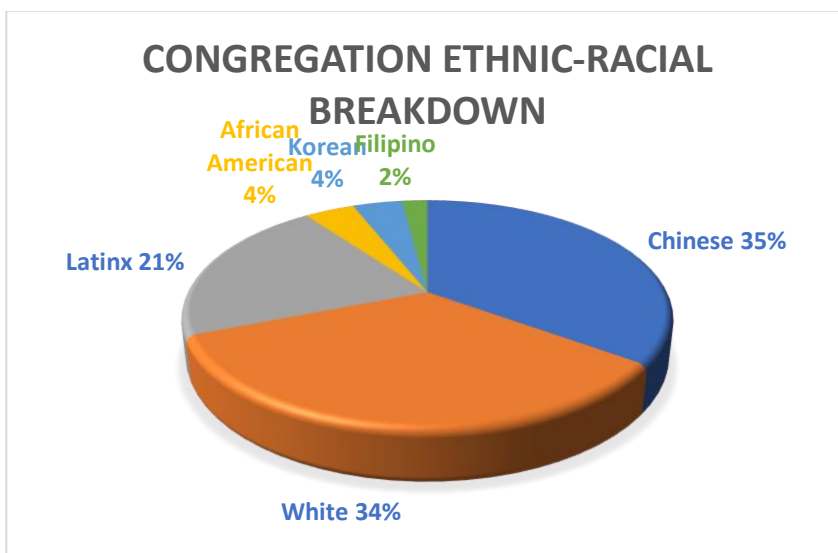
table, and other mono-cultural liturgies and practices that limit authentic multicultural fellowship.

### **Importance of the Problem**

Presently, I serve as the senior pastor of SPCC, a medium size church with approximately 143 congregants. The church is located in South Pasadena, California: an area that for most of its history has been predominantly white, but now has experienced an increasing Asian population. SPCC has a multicultural mix that closely lines up with the city's population numbers: 35% Chinese, 34% White, 21% Latinx, 4% Korean, 4% Black, and 2% Filipino. Many of our black members are members of my family and friends who have joined SPCC since I became the pastor. I was one of only two black persons at SPCC when they called me to the pastorate in August of 2015. As the Asian population continues to burgeon in the city of South Pasadena and its surrounding communities, SPCC is seeing a swell of equal proportions in our numbers of Asian members as well. Currently, the fastest growing group in our faith community is our Chinese population. To address this rapidly growing community, we hired a Chinese assistant pastor, who prepares sermon notes in Mandarin, assists in getting language appropriate materials, such as Mandarin Bibles and brochures, and also keeps me informed of the needs of our Asian population. Although his input and perspective help immensely, his efforts still fall short of giving our Chinese community a real voice and representation at the governance level of our church. Additionally, there are other groups within our faith community who also lack voice and representation at the leadership echelon. Overcoming this deficiency is a critical piece if SPCC is going to embrace and thrive in the multicultural terrain in which we exist. Failure to adapt and appropriately respond to this changing demographic would mean certain doom. We must find a

way to give equal voice to all racial-ethnic groups in our faith community to flourish and sustain ourselves in this new era.

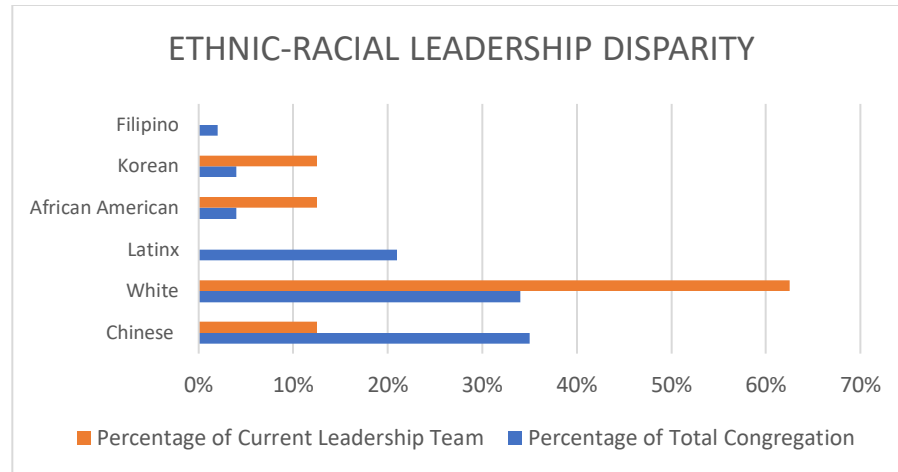
The pie chart below depicts the cultural mix at SPCC. We are comprised of six ethnic-racial groups with whites and Chinese congregants leading the way in terms of population numbers. As a result of our rich diversity, the challenge for our church liturgy and worship service is to develop and incorporate a diverse range of cultural practices and customs that intentionally include all groups in the life of the church. Presently, our fellowship gatherings include a variety of culturally specific customs and practices such as Master Tea Ceremonies, which are important to our Chinese members and Cinco de Mayo celebrations, which honor our Hispanic members heritage. But more must be done to give these groups a real voice in the life of the church. Every year we celebrate our rich cultural heritages by acknowledging special holidays with foods, games, and ceremonies that accentuate our differences and cement our bonds. This goes a long way towards helping us integrate liturgical and worship practices that represent all our racial-ethnic groups.



*Exhibit 1: SPCC Ethnic-Racial Diversity*

However, although our congregation represents a gracious mix of many cultures and we have grown to appreciate this uniqueness, our leadership team still lags behind in equally representing all of our cultural diversity. This is important because a culturally diverse leadership team gives us the best chance of meeting the needs of a culturally diverse congregation and finding ways to work together towards our common interests. One principle way in which SPCC can capitalize on the burgeoning cultural diversity in our community is to ensure that all racial-ethnic groups in our congregation are represented on our leadership team. Although we have had success in bringing in members from many groups, we have not been as intentional as we need to be in order to incorporate all groups into our leadership function. I believe that achieving culturally diverse leadership represents the next phase in the evolution of multicultural churches.

The racial-ethnic disparity on our leadership team at SPCC is portrayed in the graph below. Two groups, Filipinos and Hispanics, are not represented on our leadership team while whites hold a disproportionate number of seats at 63%. Consequently, the needs of Filipinos and Hispanics at SPCC are not adequately addressed. In our quest to tailor our worship service and accompanying materials, such as Bibles, sermons, brochures, it is incumbent upon us to consider the needs of all the members of our faith community. Instead of having a leadership team where the groups that make up our congregation are represented in proportion to their respective percentages in the overall church population, our new leadership model grants each racial-ethnic group equal voice regardless of how many members are in the group. This would ensure that all groups are able to voice their specific needs and be included in planning and visioning for our church. Equal voice for all groups is paramount in achieving racial-ethnic parity at SPCC. If we fail to recognize this, our neglect of certain groups can lead to decline in those groups and spawn an environment that is insensitive to the diversity of our community.

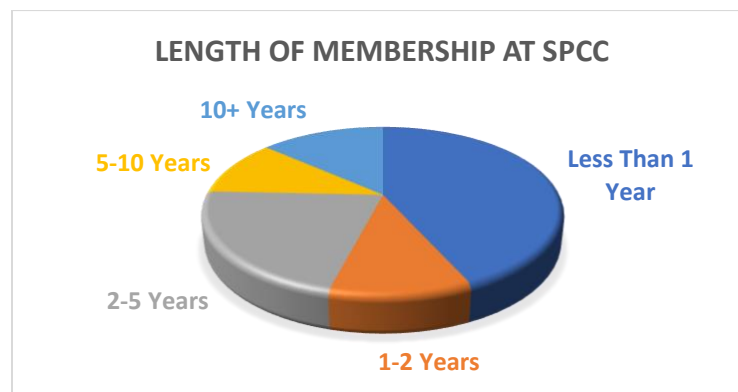


***Exhibit 2: SPCC Leadership Disparity***

The present procedure for electing members to the leadership team is based primarily on length of membership at SPCC. Using length of membership as a main criterion for election to the leadership team has served the church well since the longer one has attended our church, the better he or she will understand its mission and vision. However, the members with the most time at SPCC are mostly our white members, who have family ties that may stretch back several decades. This arrangement makes it difficult for racial-ethnic members just joining our faith community to participate in its leadership function. Although a majority white leadership team has been a long-time standing tradition at SPCC, the general consensus among our white leaders and members at large is that this tradition must change. Collectively we have come to recognize that to survive in these changing times, we must adapt our leadership benchmark to accommodate the recent influx of multicultural immigrants to our community. Another bright-spot in our quest to integrate our leadership team can be seen at the committee level. While diversity at the top straggles behind, diversity at the committee level has soared because length of membership is not the deciding criterion to serve as a committee chairperson. Fifteen out of

20 committees are chaired by persons of color—a formidable paradigm shift in a short period of time.

Many of the congregants at SPCC have less than one year of membership. This is especially true for the newcomers: our racial-ethnic groups, which includes our burgeoning Chinese immigrant population. In the pie chart below, the members with 10 years or more are predominantly white, while the majority of those with less than one year are our racial-ethnic members. When I arrived at SPCC the church was in deep decline. We had less than 25 communicant members, most of whom were white, and had been with the church for many years. Many of them had seen the days when the pews were full and they were determined to see the church experience those days again. Without their dedication and perseverance, SPCC could never have survived the many years of drought it endured. It is because of their loyalty to SPCC that they are now in the position of being the members with the longest membership standings. However, SPCC’s current policy for electing members to the leadership team, which favors longevity, has the potential to isolate and divide our faith community along racial-ethnic lines. The white elder members’ longevity has led to a situation where they dominate the leadership team in numbers which give them an unequalled voice in the life of the church.



***Exhibit 3: SPCC Length of Membership***

In order for our leadership team to include of all groups in the leadership function, we need a different criterion for determining how congregants will be elected to the leadership team. Although we have embraced and welcomed the influx of minorities moving into the area in recent years, we have not been intentional about diversifying our leadership team. Consequently, the majority group still maintains control over most of the church's resources and affairs. This means that even though minorities are growing in numbers, both in the community and at SPCC, the current model of leadership and traditional church practices ensure whites will continue to dominate our leadership team. The research for this project looked at how this long-standing traditions at SPCC is counter-productive to our efforts to engage and reach out to the culturally diverse people in our surrounding community. Changing the paradigm after decades of a tradition that maintains and supports the status-quo of mono-cultural leadership will take careful planning and intentional effort. But if we are to integrate and sustain the rich diversity that is presently proliferating at SPCC, opening up our leadership function is of paramount importance.

Another goal of my research project that has the potential to move us closer to multi-cultural leadership is to help members of SPCC see how the values, practices and liturgy of our faith community are intricately embedded in Western culture. According to McRae and Short, authors of *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life: Crossing Boundaries*, SPCC and Western churches in general, like “many organizations in the United States are embedded in the dominant cultural patterns of society, which have at their core white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideas, values, and beliefs that originate from descendants of white European ethnic groups in the United States.”<sup>6</sup> Only by considering how Western culture is interwoven in its polity and practices can SPCC be able to truly incorporate the cultures of its

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<sup>6</sup> Mary B. McRae and Ellen L. Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life: Crossing Boundaries* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010), 65.

diverse membership and become a genuinely multicultural faith community—one that also has a multicultural leadership team. Although more churches are embracing multiculturalism—this is critical to survive in America—many have still not diversified their leadership team.

Multicultural leadership is a key to growing and sustaining a multicultural faith community.

### **History of South Pasadena Christian Church**

SPCC is over 113 years old and is one of the oldest churches in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Located in the heart South Pasadena, it has a long history of dedicated service and outreach to the local community. For most of its history, SPCC has been predominately made-up of whites, reflecting the surrounding community. Like most churches in the United States that began in the early part of the 20th century, much of our liturgy, polity and practices, including how we relate to outsiders, are intricately interwoven with Western culture. From 1906 to 2015, SPCC was predominantly led by white men: 26 in total with the only exception being a white woman who served for a short time as an interim pastor before I was hired on August 1, 2015. All 42 of the original charter members were white and many were from the same families. A white gentleman by the name of H.T. Buff was the first pastor of SPCC, which was formally chartered in February of 1906.

In the summer of 2015 the church recognized that it was in danger of closing its doors due to declining membership. As a direct result of this contingency its current leadership team decided to take drastic action to turn things around. In the seven years preceding 2015, several interim pastors had been unsuccessful in abating the decline and the few die-hard members who had stuck it out were feeling the despair. The traditional way of doing church that had sustained SPCC for many decades no longer worked. If it was going to survive, it would have to find a



way to reach its culturally diverse, radically different, and rapidly changing community. It was at that time that the leadership team was inspired to call the church's first non-white male to the pastorate. None of us could have imagined the turnaround the church would experience. At the end of my first year we had added over 50 new members. To date we have added an additional 68, bringing our total roster to 143 communicant members.

When I was called to pastor SPCC, as I mentioned above, I was one of the only two black persons in the church and there were about 25 members, most of which were white, with a few Chinese members, who very quickly became our fastest growing segment. The growth of our Chinese population could have occurred much sooner, but when I arrived there was friction between the white and the Chinese congregants. The problem was a clash of cultures—Chinese members wanted to incorporate their cultural customs and foods into the life of the church while the white members were hoping for a resurgence of the traditional culture and ways of doing things that sustained them in times past. The Chinese were progressive, looking to the future as an opportunity to do things differently, while the whites were conservative, looking at the past hoping to return to the status quo. The white interim pastors, feeling the pressure from the white leadership team who had hired them, conceded to tradition and alienated the Chinese population. Unable to come to terms, the Chinese members felt stymied and began leaving the church. One of my first tasks and the single greatest move of God to restore and rebuild SPCC was to improve relations between these two groups and foster an environment that could welcome and integrate the rich diversity spring-up in our community. As a black pastor, I was able to serve as a catalyst and conduit between our white and Chinese members and take the edge off the rough relations that had developed between them. Although we have come a long way, there is still much work to be done.

## **Thesis and Summary of Argument**

To solve the problems facing SPCC in its efforts to adapt to and integrate the rich diversity of its surrounding community, we need to consider the biblical and theological foundations for multicultural leadership in multicultural congregations. The recognition of the importance and prevalence of a growing multicultural church population make a biblical understanding of church leadership a timely and critical subject for SPCC. Our understanding of the importance of intercultural fellowship, building community, unrestricted camaraderie around common interests, church administration, and developing an appreciation of our differences, must be grounded in biblical principles if SPCC's polity, practices and liturgy are going to have the weight and depth to sustain a multicultural congregation. We want to establish a mutual empathy for multicultural leadership and fellowship that will revolutionize our understanding of doing church in the 21st century. According to the apostle Paul, one way to achieve this is to recognize that we are all one in Christ Jesus,

So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

These words lead us to embrace the significance and relevance of intercultural competence education in order to improve communication and interaction between members of our culturally diverse congregation. To do this we must be willing to become like our brothers and sisters which requires going beyond merely knowing a little about each other's culture, to being able to embrace and appreciate our cultural differences. According to Janet Bennett, author of "Cultivating Intercultural Competence," "Cultural knowledge does not equal intercultural

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<sup>7</sup> Galatians 3:26-28 (NIV).

competence since a person can be an expert on a particular aspect of Chinese culture and yet be unable to negotiate well with his or her Chinese counterparts.”<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the gap between knowledge and competence may be due to the lack of self-awareness of one’s own culture or an inability to put their knowledge into practice. What I hope to accomplish in this case study is to develop a framework whereby SPCC can begin to incorporate ideas for intercultural competence formation as a regular practice between the many groups of its faith community.

The overall objective of my research project is to propose a new model of church leadership which allows SPCC to maximize its effectiveness in reaching all the groups of its faith community with the message of gospel. I propose a model for leadership that recognizes and gives voice to all of the groups that make up SPCC’s diverse membership, informs its worship, leads to more innovative and creative ways to bridge the language gaps, integrates ideas that reflect common cultural interests, engenders a greater sense of community, and improves its communicable capacity to “love our neighbors as we love ourselves.” Critical to developing this new model is recognizing what skill-set will be needed to improve communication and interaction among the different groups that make up our church. Bennett suggests, “The intercultural skill set typically includes such characteristics and skills as the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, adapt, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety.”<sup>9</sup> The objective of the new model will be to show that, just as in the early church, all members of SPCC should feel valued and included in the life and work of our faith community. One obvious way that we will measure progress in this area is by the actual representation of all groups on the leadership team. The best chance we have to ensure that all members feel valued

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<sup>8</sup> Janet Bennett, “Cultivating Intercultural Competence” in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. Darla K. Deardorff (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, “Cultivating Intercultural Competence,” 132.

and included in the life and work of our faith community is by giving all groups voice at the leadership table. A not so obvious way that we will achieve our objective will be measured in the readiness of the members of our various racial-ethnic groups to express their needs and opinions as we work toward our common interests. This new model of leadership requires the representatives of the leadership team to go beyond the needs and interests of their respective groups, in order to pursue our common interests of spreading God's love through the message of the gospel. Although SPCC is one of the most culturally diverse churches in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it still has to meet the challenge to give equal voice to all of its ethnic-racial groups at the leadership level if we expect to meet the challenges of doing church in the 21st century. To meet these challenges, SPCC must be sensitive to the needs of a multicultural faith community. We must develop liturgy, polity, and worship practices that promote intercultural competence education. Intercultural competence education is the catalyst to forging the kind of fellowship that recognizes and values cultural diversity, while also fostering a church infrastructure that represents and gives voice to all members of the body.

### **Method of Research**

This project will explore ways that intercultural competence education can inform leadership and fortify our sense of community at SPCC. The principle method of investigation that I will use to explore SPCC's current level of intercultural competence is the case study approach. This approach to doing research will allow me to examine and explore possible ways SPCC can work together to achieve a more egalitarian leadership paradigm and greater awareness of our differences and common interests. The research is designed to uncover pro-

active solutions using observation, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. We are a faith community with a growing multicultural population, so it is incumbent on me as the senior pastor to be concerned with an equitable infrastructure that includes all members. I believe a new model of leadership will allow us to go deeper in our understanding of how to address the needs of a multicultural faith community. I want to look at ways to honor diversity while helping to forge community among people of different ethnicities. Ultimately, with the development of a praxis of intentional inclusion, empowerment, and recognition of cultural differences and similarities, our faith community will be in a better position to serve the needs of all of its members and pursue the common interests that define us as people of God.

### **Project Description**

Cultural competence, as defined by Dr. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, author of *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*, is “the ability to recognize and respond to varying aspects of cultural differences, including religious differences, and to have the capacity to maintain relationships across differences in order for authentic religious pluralism.”<sup>10</sup> Lebaron defines cultural competence in essentially the same way, but with a different term. Instead of cultural competence she uses the term “cultural fluency” which she defines as “internalized familiarity with the workings of culture, the currents of the underground rivers inside us and the others around us.”<sup>11</sup> As we work to achieve cultural and cross-cultural competence in our faith community, our goal will be to develop a governance model that fully represents all groups. To meet this challenge and begin to bridge relations within our diverse

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<sup>10</sup> Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), xxxii.

<sup>11</sup> Lebaron. *Bridging Cultural Conflicts*, 41.

congregation, we must be intentional about establishing practices that promote and develop cultural and cross-cultural competency. To achieve this end, the purpose of this project is to address issues related to the development of polity, practices, and liturgy necessary for the establishment of a culturally diverse governance model.

This project lays out plans to transform SPCC's leadership team, which historically has been comprised of whites, into a diversified team of leaders representing all groups in our faith community. This new ministry team is intended to create a platform where members from all groups in the faith community have voice and can come together with mutual respect for our cultural differences and multicultural exchanges. According to Lebaron, this can be achieved through, "engaging others with a spirit of inquiry, learning about the ways our and their perceptions differ rather than seeing only the familiar picture that shows us the world as we would like it to be."<sup>12</sup> Intercultural competence is integral to the paradigm-shift that will move SPCC away from merely tolerating our differences to actually appreciating them.

This project will also explore ways to teach intercultural competence to other faith communities with growing multicultural populations. Once we have established a praxis of intentional inclusion, empowerment, and recognition of cultural differences and common interests, our faith community will be in a better position to begin working together with the many racial-ethnic groups in our greater community. The culturally diverse leadership team will bring together the different racial-ethnic groups of my faith community to discover how intercultural competence can lead to greater involvement and participation in the life of the church. This kind of awareness building through praxis, can catapult us towards the kind of radical community where all people feel welcomed and valued. The target will be to develop

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<sup>12</sup> Lebaron, *Bridging Cultural Conflicts*, 85.

practices that forge mutual relationships in a safe environment that allows members to discuss ways we can “do church” together more effectively. This new model of leadership ministry will inform our worship and lead to more innovative and creative ways of being a faith community that genuinely cares about each other. Jesus de-privatized and de-individualized the social norm of the church, which is also the accepted social norm in the world. He revolutionized the concept of community. Instead of being solely focused on one’s self, the members of faith communities should, “Each look not only to his or her own interests, but also to the interests of others.”<sup>13</sup>

This case study explores and exposes how deeply entranced Western culture is imbedded in Judea-Christianity and seeks to identify ways to integrate a broader range of cultural perspectives and insights into the governance function of SPCC. Using focus groups, observation, interviews, and questionnaires, this project uncovers the deeply held views that are counter-productive to intercultural competence and seeks to discover practices, styles of worship and liturgy that represent a multicultural faith community. These tools allowed me to investigate the current leadership structure and provide direction for achieving a more balanced and integrated leadership team for our future. It is my hope that the project brings about communal transformation at SPCC in the areas of leadership and fellowship. Integral to this transformation is the development of a multicultural leadership team that establishes a platform for real dialogue and authentic cultural exchange.

Focus groups, which contribute greatly to the findings of this research effort (see Psychoanalytical Perspectives on Group Leadership below), offered opportunities to explore the topic of multicultural leadership with members of SPCC: its advantages and how we can achieve it given our current style of leadership. The focus groups consisted of 5-7 church members from

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<sup>13</sup> Philippians 2:4 (NIV).

a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Through small-group discussions we considered the challenges that bicultural members transitioning into American society and the church face. We were particularly interested in how multicultural leadership at SPCC could be more sensitive to the needs of those transitioning into church life and provide a platform to voice their specific concerns. We used story-telling as a method to share cultural perspectives, personal accounts and to explore alternatives to the traditional practices that alienate and exclude minority groups from church leadership. The focus groups aided us in learning more about relevant experiences and opinions that will guide our future actions. The composition of the groups along with the discussions we had made it clear to us we will have to carefully planned and create non-threatening environments where our members feel free to talk openly and give honest opinions about their experience in our faith community. All who participated in the focus groups were actively encouraged to not only express their own opinions, but also respond to other members and questions posed by the group leaders. The focus groups made it possible to obtain in-depth answers to the questions about intercultural challenges and conflicts in general and specific to our current leadership team (see Appendix A). For example, during one session a participant asked about the current disposition of the leadership team at SPCC with respect to its racial-ethnic make-up. Less concerned with its racial-ethnic mix, she wanted to know why there were no young-adults on the team. Although the question had more to do with age diversity than the importance of intercultural diversity, it reminded us of the need to include millennials in our leadership function.

Observation allowed us to witness first-hand the extent and depth of the intercultural interaction already taking place between the members of SPCC. Individuals were chosen as observers who were not members of the current church leadership team, and who were not



members of the focus groups. They were instructed to interact with members of the current leadership team to observe how decisions are made and the criteria used to make those decisions. Each observer was given questions to ask themselves as a means to control what observers were looking for and to limit the scope of the observations to objectives relevant to the research (see Appendix B). This research method made it possible for us to not only observe the current process for decision-making, but also to gain greater empathy for the gravity of the work done by our leadership team. The observers reported that for the most part, SPCC members across cultures interact well and want to develop relationships with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. One prominent observation that came from this research is that, although people want to interact and develop relationships across cultures, language differences are a formidable obstacle. As a result of language differences, our after-church lunch program is generally segregated based on language. Another important finding that came out of our observations was how valuable and important the translation devices we use in our main worship service are to our non-English speaking members. Our Chinese members greatly appreciate that the church is concerned enough to invest in this technology. The research has led us to plan a worship service where English speakers will use the devices to translate a message delivered in Mandarin in order to gain a greater sense of the value of this vital technology. We also plan to use the devices to translate messages given in other languages, like Spanish and Tagalog. The observations also revealed the need to translate more of our written church materials into other languages including Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog.

Interviews allowed us to get the story behind a participant's experiences. Those who participated in the interviews were chosen from the congregation at large and from those who had participated in the focus groups. I selected individuals to conduct interviews who emerged

from the focus groups with an understanding of the purpose of my research and who had a desire to see our church make strides in intercultural competence. The interviewers were instructed to pursue in-depth information about an interviewee's understanding of how culture impacts the leadership function and their experiences with the current leadership team. The personal interviews made it possible for us to get opinions without the pressure respondents may sometimes feel in focus groups. Consequently, some great information was obtained from this research method. Although the interviews confirmed our focus group findings and observations, which overall showed that SPCC is a racial-ethnic-friendly church, a few individuals did share that they had encountered racial bias at our church. More elaboration on this finding will be developed below where we consider psychoanalytic perspectives on leadership at SPCC. Interviews were also used to follow-up on the questionnaires by offering interviewers an opportunity to further investigate anonymously the responses to specific questions. The interview questions were opened-ended to allow respondents room to elaborate (see Appendix C).

Questionnaires were used to gather feedback from a larger number of members than the focus groups, observations, or personal interviews could acquire. Though all 143 members were asked to participate, surprisingly 80% found time and were available to complete the questionnaire. One advantage of questionnaires is that they allowed each participant the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on their experience. Some participants expressed feelings of anxiety, fear, awkwardness, or discomfort that in all likelihood they would not have felt comfortable sharing openly. When it comes to sharing about cultural differences and similarities, many people experience anxiety, particularly when they perceive that their culture may be in conflict with the dominant culture. Stella Ting-Toomey, author of "Intercultural Conflict Competence as a Facet of Intercultural Competence Development" points out that,

“Intercultural conflict is the perceived or actual incompatibility of cultural values, norms, face orientations, goals, scarce resources, processes, and/or outcomes in a face-to-face context.”<sup>14</sup> The questionnaires help to alleviate the tension of face-to-face encounters and allowed for the exploration of the respondents’ opinions, attitudes, feelings, and perceptions about multicultural experiences without exposing their identity. We used closed-end questions where respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see Appendix D). There was also an open-ended question that asked respondents to share their feelings about what SPCC could do to improve its effectiveness in accommodating our cultural diversity. While many respondents did not offer any suggestions, the ones we got were quite informative. A few of the responses were, we should sing more worship songs in multiple languages, do more activities together outside of the church, and have more discussions about cultural diversity (a suggestion that may be a reference to the focus groups).

### **Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this project is limited to the church members, committee chairs and leadership of SPCC. The project is also limited to the concerns and challenges related to those racial-ethnic groups who attend SPCC. Although it is my hope that the findings of my research can have application for any multicultural faith community, I understand the limitations imposed by the nature of the project. Multicultural leadership is only applicable to churches that actually have diverse congregations and each faith community may have different challenges.

Nevertheless, intercultural competence education can improve communication in any church

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<sup>14</sup> Stella Ting-Toomey, “Intercultural Conflict Competence as a Facet of Intercultural Competence Development” in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. Darla K. Deardorff (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 100-101.

where people of different racial-ethnic backgrounds and cultural heritages come together. In light of this consideration, I believe this research will be beneficial to many faith communities.

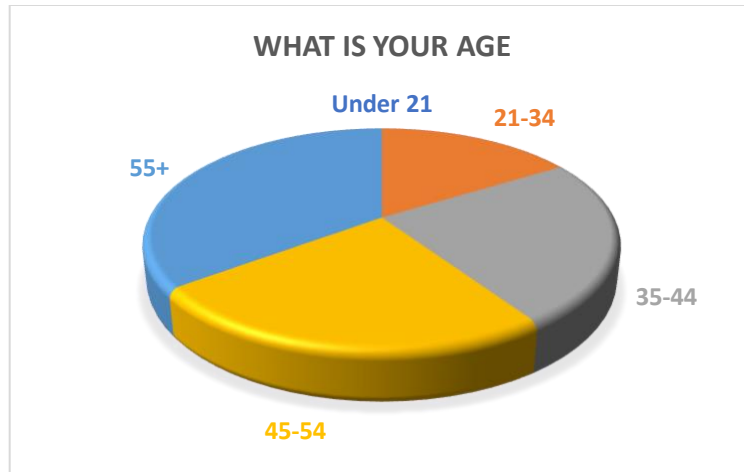
## **Chapter Two: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives on Leadership in the Church**

### **Ministry Setting**

In addition to being a multicultural church, SPCC is also a church with a wide range of age diversity. This is significant because many churches around the country have average ages in the mid to upper sixties as baby boomers, the largest population segment in many churches, reach retirement. However, at SPCC we have many young adults and families who are exceptions to the general trend that shows a decline in religious involvement by these two groups. Many aging churches in our denomination have closed their doors because they have not been able to attract millennials. Consequently, they have not been able to continue managing the daily business of the church. Recent surveys, conducted by the Pew Research Center, have found that younger adults are far less likely than older generations to identify with a religion, believe in God or engage in a variety of religious practices.<sup>15</sup> As the pie-chart below indicates, the trend is not trending at SPCC. We continue to be a church that is relevant to young adults and families. In the questionnaire used for this research, we asked church members for their age. One of the most promising signs of our vitality is the fact that young millennials with children are joining our church. Presently there are three mothers in their twenties who are expecting, and contrary to when I began at SPCC, we now have a burgeoning group of youth as well. While many of our older members joined the church decades ago, the middle agers and young families are recent additions.

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<sup>15</sup> “The Age Gap in Religion Around the World,” Pew Research Center, accessed January 21, 2018, [www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/](http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/).



***Exhibit 4: SPCC Age Demographics***

### **Philosophy of Church Leadership**

As the senior pastor, my philosophy of church leadership is founded on the notion that I am a religious educator charged with teaching my flock what Jesus says is the hallmark of the Church—the unconditional love of God. My philosophy of church leadership is the foundation of my leadership style. The unconditional love of God is the guiding principle in my duty to shepherd the flock of God. Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”<sup>16</sup> The measure of our success in developing intercultural competence at SPCC is the extent to which we emulate the unconditional love of God. Our quest to bring together in love people from all racial-ethnic groups hinges on our ability and willingness to intentionally build authentic community based on love. By carefully considering our values, priorities and objectives, we can create an infrastructure for effective and focused intercultural competence education that not only recognizes, but appreciates our cultural proclivities. bell

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<sup>16</sup> John 13:34-35 (NIV).

hooks, author of *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, refers to our cultural differences as “cultural codes.” She believes that, “To teach effectively a diverse student body [congregation], I have to learn these codes. And so do the students [congregants].”<sup>17</sup> For communication to improve at SPCC among its various racial-ethnic groups, each member must be willing to learn how his or her neighbor thinks. We must be willing to learn how culture has shaped each other’s hearts and minds for the purpose of tearing down the walls that have traditionally divided us.

Intercultural competence education is the telos of my philosophy of church leadership because it is essential to expressing the unconditional love of God and developing the attitudes necessary for the paradigm shift it will take to transform SPCC’s leadership model. This philosophy of church leadership gives clarity to our decision-making and our actions, which help us to inspire and to motivate the church in support of Jesus’s vision. It gives us a clear mission and way of operating that is conducive to mutual respect and trust. Intercultural competence education is the religious education that all believers need. To achieve it we must be intentional about communicating its relevance and urgency to our faith community. Intercultural competence education, for SPCC, must take on the power of religious education and impact the hearts and minds of those in our faith community. In his critique of Paulo Freire, author of *pedagogy of the oppressed*, Wayne Cavalier, in his article entitled, “The three voices of Freire: An exploration of his thought over time,” give us a glimpse of the power of religious education as understood by Freire, “Religious education must touch the reality of the learners and of the society in which the learners live and act.”<sup>18</sup> As a leader in the church I believe it is incumbent

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<sup>17</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 41.

<sup>18</sup> Wayne Cavalier, “The three voices of Freire: An exploration of his thought over time,” *Religious Education* 97, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 262.

on me to make sure I am not promoting the worldly leadership values of domination and control, but instead the servant-leadership values established by Jesus Christ. He reminds us,

Jesus called them together and said, you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to the status-quo of leadership in the world and the leadership advocated by Jesus, Pablo Freire, author *pedagogy of the oppressed* and Mary Boys, author of *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*, both ask great questions to this end respectively. Pablo Freire asks, “Does my religious education activity promote the unjust status quo, or does it promote faith-based action on behalf of a more just and humane world?”<sup>20</sup> While Mary Boys asks, “What does it mean to educate in faith?” and, “What does it mean to be religious?”<sup>21</sup> My ministerial setting demands that my philosophy of church leadership, which is to love unconditionally the way God loves me, consider the servant-leadership model exhibited by Jesus and the multicultural context of SPCC and its surrounding community.

The sign that intercultural competence education is impacting and changing the hearts and minds of our faith community will be that we begin to genuinely love each other, regardless of our differences. For example, last year, as we have done every year since I came on board as senior pastor, SPCC recognized the Chinese celebration of the New Year. At that time there were some in our faith community who objected to honoring it because of how it uses the zodiac

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<sup>19</sup> Mark 10:42-45 (NIV).

<sup>20</sup> Cavalier, “The three voices of Freire,” 262.

<sup>21</sup> Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 23.

signs. In the objecting members' opinion, recognizing the zodiac is a contradiction of Scripture. However, through intercultural competence education we can show these members that just because the Chinese members of our church want to participate in their cultural tradition of celebrating the new year, it does not mean that they are rejecting Jesus or their Christianity. We have to educate so that as a multicultural faith community we can follow the lead of the apostle Paul,

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.<sup>22</sup>

Intercultural competence education is helping us to see that as long as what we believe about Jesus is not compromised, we are free to express the cultural differences and practices that define our history and heritage. We are able to move beyond a mere tolerance to actually appreciating what makes us unique and different from one another. Whatever we do it must engender love in action and not just tongue. Simply rejecting all customs and practices that a "Western" brand of Christianity deems heretical is unacceptable. We must question the traditions handed down over the years by our church fathers that discriminate against and exclude the practices and beliefs of non-white people. We cannot afford to merely open our mouths and digest whatever the monoculture church of the past feeds us. Authentic intercultural competence education cannot be like what hooks refers to as the "banking system of education, an approach to learning that is rooted in the notion that all students need to do is consume information fed to them by a professor and

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV).



be able to memorize and store it.”<sup>23</sup> According to Freire, that kind of education failed in public schools, and I believe it will fail in the church, because, as Freire concludes, “it does not address the existential experience of the students.”<sup>24</sup> Our success in bridging the gaps between the many cultures that make-up our faith community is dependent on intercultural competence education that is liberating and interactive. According to Freire, “Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as conscious intent upon the world.”<sup>25</sup> In my view, this means teaching our faith community to think outside of the box when it comes to what is acceptable in the church. We can no longer afford to exclude people and practices that do not fit into our “westernized” view of Christianity.

SPCC is a faith community with a growing multicultural population, and by virtue of our common Christian heritage, we cannot subject the members of our faith community to the inequities of society that deny fairness and exclude people based on their ethnicity in the church. If we ignore injustice and inequality in the world, we are prone to ignore them in the church. The Bible teaches we are to love all people unconditionally and that justice and fairness are at the heart of love. We must be willing to give up on old ways of thinking—namely, the destructive dichotomy of the us vs. them mentality—and be re-educated in a new multifaceted approach. Although most agree that working together is the ideal, finding ways to achieve this balance is not easy and requires re-learning the ways people work together. This process requires adjusting to a new way of thinking. hooks points out that, “there can be, and usually is, some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches...

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<sup>23</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 72.

<sup>25</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

Multiculturalism compels educators to recognize the narrow boundaries that have shaped the way knowledge is shared.”<sup>26</sup> The method and practice of teaching that will facilitate what I hope to accomplish through intercultural competence education will utilize intercultural and interlingual pedagogical approaches in an effort to provide my congregation with the skills necessary for transformation.

Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook, points out that before a faith community can engage in interreligious dialogue, it must deal with intercultural differences. Although Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook is primarily concerned with developing interreligious competence, she points out that, “Without a functional understanding of the interlocking relationships between social identities of race, ethnicity, and culture, there is no foundation upon which to build greater interreligious understanding.”<sup>27</sup> I also believe that intercultural competence education will allow us to go deeper in our understanding of how to address the needs of a multicultural faith community. Faith communities must be intentional about establishing practices that promote and develop cultural competency. Like Boys, I believe I am a pioneer who must create maps for this new terrain.<sup>28</sup> I want to look at ways to honor diversity while helping members of my faith community to heuristically discover what makes each of us unique and forge communal fellowship among people of different ethnicities. Intentional inclusion, empowerment, and recognition of cultural differences and similarities, are the ultimate goals of intercultural competence education. Through building alliances and networks that support a pedagogy of shared power with a consortium of people from all social locations regardless of race, ethnicity,

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<sup>26</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxi.

<sup>28</sup> Boys, *Educating in Faith*.

culture, gender, social class, sexual identity, language, nationality, physical ability, and geography, I hope to achieve these ends.

### **Theological Conceptual Stance on Church Leadership**

I believe that the Bible makes it clear that no one group or person should dominate others and that the church should promote leadership that seeks to care for the needs of the whole faith community. Instead of pursuing individual interests only, ministry leaders, majority groups in the church, as well as parishioners, should also seek the interests of others.<sup>29</sup> If the members of SPCC can learn to value and appreciate, not simply tolerate, the cultural differences of our brothers and sisters in the Lord, then we will have the foundation to move toward a truly integrated leadership team that represents all groups. It is my hope that all members of SPCC, particularly our leaders and ministry heads, who have a vested interest in seeing our church thrive in these trying times, will see the theological implications for intercultural competence education. As a pastor, one of my deepest concerns is that all people are treated with compassion, not just in the church, but in society as well. My personal experiences and observations make it clear that more can be done to ensure that all people, regardless of their social location, have a voice and are counted at the table in the church and in society. As my faith community begins to appreciate each other's cultural differences, I believe that we will see the value of not only a multicultural congregation, but also for a multicultural leadership team.

The number one challenge that we will have to overcome to achieve the unity that presently eludes us is finding a way to incorporate multicultural practices into a worship liturgy that has traditionally held Eurocentric Christian practices as normative for all people of God,

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<sup>29</sup> Matthew 7:12 (NIV).

regardless of their racial-ethnic backgrounds. Western Christianity has a decidedly Eurocentric perspective and consequently, all other perspectives and cultural understandings of Christianity are deemed at best to be syncretistic or at worse, as aberrations. For example, Michael Battle, author of “A Theology of Community: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu,” points out that Africans have a different worldview and consequently see things differently from Westerners. Since the fall of Apartheid, many white South African Christians are seeking to forge a peace-truce with their black South African Christian brothers and sisters. However, according to Battle, black South African Christians must first make peace with the spirits of their ancestors and relatives who were brutally killed.<sup>30</sup> For these children of God, in every sense of the kinship, Battle further adds, “This conviction is deeply rooted in black African spirituality...”<sup>31</sup> The white South African Christians, like their Western contemporaries, assume their way of practicing Christianity to be normative for black South African Christians and in doing so have demonized the practice of honoring ancestors and have diminished their chances of establishing a peace-truce. Battle continues, “This spirituality should not be denounced as belief in ‘spirits’ but acknowledged as a worldview that knows something of the fundamental connections of all life.”<sup>32</sup> In another article entitled, “Ubuntu: Learning from African Worldview,” Battle goes on to say, “African epistemology begins with community and moves to individuality, whereas Western epistemology moves from individuality to community.”<sup>33</sup> These differences in worldviews contribute greatly to differences of opinion on the practice and purpose of religion. According to HyeRan Kim-Cragg, author of an article entitled, “A Theology of Resistance in

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Battle, “A Theology of Community: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 54, no. 2 (April 2000): 180.

<sup>31</sup> Battle, “A Theology of Community,” 180.

<sup>32</sup> Battle, “A Theology of Community,” 180.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Battle, “Ubuntu: Learning from African Worldview,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 53, no. 4 (Michaelmas 2010): 404.

Conversation with Religious Education in Unmasking Violence, Religious,” once we are liberated from this Eurocentric Christian view of the world, we can experience true community.<sup>34</sup> He believes religious education [to accomplish this end] must include remembrance, relationship building and the reclaiming of space for life. Although Kim-Cragg writes about the intolerable crisis of the Rio Negro Massacre, if the Christian church cannot find a way to unite and work together in this new multicultural terrain, it too may die in even larger numbers.

Although the major pursuit of the church should be to emulate the unconditional love of God, this pursuit cannot be divorced from the reality of the suffering and destruction caused by the violence of the dominant group. Consequently, the solution to the social ills of society and the church cannot be separated from political implications. An example of this philosophical and theological understanding of religious education is expressed in the words of hooks as she discusses the adverse effects of years of racism and oppression, “no education is politically neutral...the politics of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth, inform how and what we teach.”<sup>35</sup> I believe the same is true when we discuss church polity and practice. The language we use to quantify this pain and to identify possible solutions will have political connotations. I can relate to her story about an experience she had with Paulo Freire. She identifies a time in her life when she was struggling to put into words her pain with respect to desegregation. She says that it was Freire who gave her the political language to articulate her feeling about racial desegregation. Referring to Freire she states, “He made me think deeply about the construction of an identity in resistance.”<sup>36</sup> The idea that after decades of oppression, injustice, and dehumanization, whites could end segregation without any repairing of the psychic of black

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<sup>34</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “A Theology of Resistance in Conversation with Religious Education in Unmasking Violence, Religious,” *Religious Education* 110, no. 4 (August 14, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 46.

people in her view was like putting a band aid on an open wound. The recognition that language is integral in voicing one's perspective helps to highlight how racial-ethnic minorities and Westerners can have different world-views in the church. Language helps people to heuristically discover that Christianity is inextricably tied to one's cultural background and worldview. Intercultural competence education can facilitate cultural exchanges that recognize our differences and embrace what makes us the same. I believe intercultural education can be a catalyst for social change, not only in the church, but also in society. I agree with hooks that religious education should have a liberatory mission; it requires that we understand and appreciate our different locations in life.<sup>37</sup>

hooks understands religious education in a way that lines up with how I understand intercultural competence education. She points out that religious educators [like pastors] must be willing to cross boundaries. She states,

It is fashionable these days, when 'difference' is a hot topic in progressive circles, to talk about 'hybridity' and 'border crossing,' but we often have no concrete examples of individuals who actually occupy different locations within structures, sharing ideas with one another, mapping out terrains of commonality, connection, and shared concerns with teaching practices.<sup>38</sup>

I believe the same can be said about the church. Although some churches have embrace multiculturalism to the extent that it has almost become cliché to talk about cultural diversity in the pews, very few have been willing to share power and authority at the leadership level. The litmus test for genuine multicultural integration and fellowship is whether all groups have real power and voice in the leadership function. She goes on to say that to create a cultural climate where people are willing to challenge biases, religious educators must be willing to cross borders

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<sup>37</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 129.

and every border crossing must be honored.<sup>39</sup> I can relate to the difficulty of stepping out as a pastor against societal norms that oppresses people or support injustice. This is particularly challenging when the stakes are high, like loss of employment or social acceptance. hooks rightly points out that “it is difficult for individuals to shift paradigms and that there must be a setting for folks to voice fears, to talk about what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why.”<sup>40</sup>

The command Jesus gives to love one another as He loves us should not only be the guiding principle for church fellowship, but it should also be the standard for how Christians interact in society. Cavalier, an ordained Dominican friar, Regent of Studies, and Director of the Congar Institute for Ministry Development, believes Freire’s life emulates this truth. He writes,

The journey of Freire’s life, as evidenced in his later work, seems to have taken him from seeing education as key to the revolutionary struggle to right wrongs of class conflict as apprehended through Marxist analysis to a somewhat more explicitly *faith-based passion* that societies will be more just and humane through the assistance of an ethically responsible education for critical consciousness...the human situation is hopeless without the intervention of a loving and compassionate God.<sup>41</sup>

Some have tried to limit the importance of teaching love and the principles of godly character to faith organizations. The belief is that certain subjects are more effectively taught in secular settings than in religious settings. Although Mahatma Gandhi, as understood by Alex Damm, author of “Mahatma Gandhi and Character Education in Non-Violence: Its Relevance in Religious Studies Today,” has contributed tremendously to the discussion of the importance of building character in education, he believes it is more effective in a secular setting.<sup>42</sup> I believe that it is possible for religious education to retain its transformative power in secular settings, but

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<sup>39</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

<sup>40</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Cavalier, “The three voices of Freire,” 261 (emphasis mine).

<sup>42</sup> Alex Damm, “Mahatma Gandhi and Character Education in Non-Violence: Its Relevance in Religious Studies Today,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 14, no. 1 (January 2011).

it is most powerful in religious settings when coupled with the love of God. In my view, religious education is inextricably tied to the love and character of God and has the potential to retain its impact on hearers regardless of where it is encountered, secular and religious settings. According to Damm, “Divested of explicitly religious terms, Gandhi’s thoughts on character education still apply to secular pedagogy.”<sup>43</sup> Although I agree that a secular pedagogy can teach the importance of character education, I also believe that for religious education to be transformative, especially if it is to promote and sustain a fellowship among believers from different racial-ethnic backgrounds, it must have faith-based passion. Freire also saw the limitations of secular education to transform hearts and minds. In Cavalier’s review of his life’s work he points out that,

Freire was criticized for suggesting that social reality will be transformed primarily through educational practice, no doubt the critiques he received in relation to this point not only helped him to clarify his own thinking, but also forced him in his writing to be much more explicit about the limitations of the role education can play in the social transformation process.<sup>44</sup>

Intercultural competence education with the intent of renovating our hearts and bringing our faith community together in God’s love will be the key to sustaining an appreciation of our differences. Another author who has observed the transformative power of secular and religious education is hooks. She believes teaching should transform consciousness and liberate the soul, “Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions...it is that movement that makes education the practice of freedom.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Damm, “Mahatma Gandhi and Character Education in Non-Violence,” 4.

<sup>44</sup> Cavalier, “The three voices of Freire,” 259.

<sup>45</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 34.



I think it is wonderful that my denomination is seeking to become an anti-racist, pro-reconciling organization. We are the only mainline denomination in the United States that has incorporated anti-racism and pro-reconciliation into its mission statement. Many of the local churches in our denomination have a desire to see the end of the long-standing, hegemonic context of the white culture that is so interwoven into Western Christianity. DOC's have a collective vision to create faith communities that promote an environment where cultural competence moves us in the direction of intercultural diversity and racial justice not only in our local churches, but also at our highest echelons of our organizational structure. This vision is becoming a reality. DOC's made headlines when we elected our first woman as the President and General Minister, and just recently, we shook up the status quo again when we elected our first African American woman as President and General Minister. Although as a denomination we have made much progress, we recognize the important work that is still ahead of us.

### **Chapter Three: Psychoanalytical Perspectives on Group Leadership**

#### **Group Relations Theory**

As an African American and pastor of a multicultural church, I was particularly interested in what group relations theory has to say about how people of different ethnic-racial backgrounds might respond to and interact with leaders who are also from different ethnic-racial backgrounds. One of my goals in this research is to examine how traditional group relations theory can shed light on the dynamics of achieving effective multicultural leadership. Since members of a church have a common goal, it is likely that the behavior of members in a church group could be explained using the psychoanalytic factors indicative of all groups. According to McRae and Short a group is defined as, "A collection of individuals 1) who have significantly interdependent relations with each other; 2) who perceive themselves as a group by reliably distinguishing

members from non-members: 3) whose group identity is recognized by non-members: 4) who have differentiated roles in the group as a function of expectations from themselves, other members and non-group members: and 5) who as group members acting alone or in concert have significantly interdependent relations with other groups."<sup>46</sup> A belief that I had going into the research is affirmed by the findings of group relations theorists, who point out that members of the dominant culture may not be as open to or conscious of racial-cultural group dynamics as members of ethnic-racial groups. According to McRae and Short, "The lack of discussion concerning the existence of racial-cultural hierarchical dynamics may be reflexive of the existing societal structures that perpetuate the invisibility and institutionalization of a dominant culture..."<sup>47</sup> At SPCC I have observed this phenomenon first-hand in our various group settings. When issues related to race and ethnicity surface, the white members of our church are usually either silent or uneasy and may even seem threatened by the discussion. For the most part, society has programmed us to believe that white culture is normative for all groups in America and typically whites are either unconscious of cultural differences or insensitive to them. So, in order to uncover and observe the racial-cultural dynamics of groups relations theory at work at SPCC, I conducted focus groups to explore racial and cultural differences as they relate to authority, leadership, and power in groups. The focus groups provided the backdrop for a dialogue colored with vivid examples and illustrations of how the concepts set forth in group relations theory play out in church life.

The focus group participants were asked questions that allowed them to elaborate on their personal experience at SPCC. To test group relations theory, McRae and Short observed interactions between group members when the leader/facilitator was of the same race as the

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<sup>46</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 6.

majority of group members and when it was the other way around.<sup>48</sup> I used this same methodology to compose my focus groups for this case study. Due to time constraints and a limited number of volunteers for the project, I put together six groups of 5-7 individuals with the following composition: one mixed group with a female facilitator, one group with whites and a black facilitator, one group with blacks and a white facilitator, one group with Latinx and a Filipino facilitator, one group with Chinese and a Korean facilitator, and one group with Koreans with a Chinese facilitator. The groups met twice for one hour and a half each meeting and were encouraged to share the time equally. The participants were told that the goals of the focus groups were to gain insight into race relations at SPCC and to discuss ways we might improve our fellowship together through a culturally diverse leadership team. It was the facilitators job to keep the discussions on track and to pose the focus group questions (see Appendix A for questions).

### **Diversified Authority**

Once the introductions had taken place and the focus group subjects were relaxed and comfortable sharing, the groups began to tackle the tougher questions dealing with racial-ethnic issues designed to expose the dynamics outlined in group relations theory. The facilitator asked questions that allowed group members to describe their understanding of how cultural diversity at SPCC impacts their understanding of leadership, authority, and power in the church. The answers were interesting. Most group members believed that authority, leadership and power in the church operate just as it does in society. They pointed out that the same power struggles between the races in society are alive and at work in the church. This is consistent with McRae

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<sup>48</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*.

and Short's findings who report that, "From a systems perspective, groups are confronted with racial-cultural issues that are related to the power differentials, authority, and class hierarchies that exist in society."<sup>49</sup> This seems contrary to what the church should look like according to the Bible, since in Scripture the church is commanded to not only avoid the power struggles we see taking place in the world, but also to love each other unconditionally. However, the focus groups helped us see that people from different racial-ethnic groups face the same challenges to their autonomy in the church as they do outside of the church.

Even though five of the six groups had facilitators that were people of color, the white male facilitator tended to be more authoritarian and controlling than the groups where a person of color was the facilitator. The facilitator was charged with directing the group's discussions and keeping it on track, however, the white male facilitator tended to hold himself out as the expert in the group: the one who had all the right answers for the tough issues raised by members of the group. In the groups with people of color (and with the female) as facilitators, this was not usually the case. The facilitators of color were more likely to allow others in the group to share different views for how their experience, grounded in their own cultural traditions, might be useful to other group members in sorting out their feelings on these tough racial-ethnic issues. In those groups, authority and control were more readily shared. The focus groups exposed a real need for finding ways to share authority and provide a platform where all racial-ethnic groups play a significant role in determining what's best for our faith community. Our ultimate authority and example for how authority should be shared is Jesus. Following Him in the mission the Church means we should seek to serve rather than to subvert or dominate our brothers and sisters.

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<sup>49</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 4.

## **Diversified Power**

In their conclusion, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, authors of *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*, agree that, “Multicultural living, teaching, and ministry involve understanding power dynamics.”<sup>50</sup> In society, the dominant group has privilege over people of color. In the focus groups, this tendency was also evident. The white leader and those leaders who possessed the attributes of the dominant culture, such as language, education, and/or affluence, were more apt to exert their power over individuals in the group who did not possess those attributes. The white leader and those leaders who possessed the preferred attributes were more likely to interrupt or control the pace and length of sharing. While these actions might be typical to facilitation, with these individuals these tactics seemed to be from a more authoritative demeanor. Another interesting observation that came out of the focus groups is the tendency for group members of color to more easily project authority and power onto the white leader and those that possessed the preferred attributes. According to McRae and Short, “Projections concerning leadership, power, and authority may be placed on individuals who physically represent (e.g. via skin color, gender, and language fluency) the groups with more power in society.”<sup>51</sup> In a discussion after the focus groups, although those individuals who did not possess dominant attributes agreed that projection was a real possibility, they also pointed out the overt bent of the white facilitator and those who possessed the dominant attributes to be more willing to exert their authority and power over the group. One black male from the group with the white leader gave a specific example of a time when a black female member was dealing with a particularly difficult issue

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<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 216.

<sup>51</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 60.

and the white facilitator interrupted her sharing in what seemed to be an overt attempt to exert control over the conversation. In this member's view (the black male), the facilitator might have handled it differently if the struggling woman were of the majority culture.

This kind of bias towards one's own race is not exclusive to whites. When a member of a focus group expressed his or her feelings about issues related to his or her culture, if the facilitator of the group was of another race, he or she usually could not relate as well as the majority group members. Often the facilitator in those situations would generally try to re-frame the issue in objective terms that eliminated or minimized any cultural implications. For example, in the group where the Chinese were the majority with a Korean facilitator, a Chinese male shared his experience with learning English in America. He shared that in China, although the opportunity to learn English is available, many people do not have access and that affluent Chinese people are more likely to learn English. The Korean facilitator immediately began to share how in Korea the teaching of English is much more prevalent and accessible. Rather than allowing the Chinese member to share his unique cultural experience, the leader moved the discussion to one he could relate to better. According to McRae and Short, "When group members come from diverse backgrounds, there is the potential for unintentional biased behaviors related to attitudes, beliefs, and feelings to affect group dynamics"<sup>52</sup>

From the focus groups it was obvious that perceptions of the different group facilitators were based, in part, on internalized understandings of what leadership should look like. When it came to challenging the facilitator's authority, more often than not the racially mixed group (the mixed group with the female facilitator) had more difficulty. This was odd, because one might expect that there would be more challenges to authority in the groups where the facilitator was

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<sup>52</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 20.

from a different racial-ethnic background than the majority of the group members. However, challenges to authority that were most witnessed were not between individuals of different racial-ethnic backgrounds, the challenges to authority were most often between individuals of the same racial-ethnic background. There was a greater tendency to challenge the leader when the group makeup was racial and culturally mixed. This is consistent with findings by McRae and Short, where they point out that, “Some research on work and task groups suggests that groups that are racially and culturally mixed have more difficulty working effectively with their differences.”<sup>53</sup> In these settings the reversal of the minority/majority may incline members to be more at ease in challenging the authority of the leader because of a higher comfort level to express dissonance and projections onto the leader.

### **Diversified Leadership**

Focus groups members were asked if they felt there were any notable differences in the facilitation styles of the racial-ethnic facilitators and the white facilitator. The responses were surprising. Many believed the people of color were less effective than the white facilitator. In their view, the facilitators of color seemed to struggle more with facilitating an orderly meeting where everyone had a chance to participate than the white facilitator. I asked for specific examples of distinctions in facilitation styles that would account for their view and I was astounded that they could not really give me any concrete examples. I wondered if the differences were only perceived and not real. I remember my mother having something of the same kind of internalized prejudice. Even though doctors of color attended the same medical schools and pass the same exams as white doctors, she preferred white doctors. I also wondered

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<sup>53</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 133.

if this was what McRae and Short refer to as an internal feeling of incompetence where there is an unconscious assumption “that when the leader is from a racial-cultural minority group, the expectation and projections are more reflexive of incompetence”<sup>54</sup> It is astonishing that people on both sides: whites and people of color, are so programmed to believe that the dominant culture is somehow more intelligent and suited for leadership. Even though Christianity teaches us that we are all created in the image of God, we are nevertheless conditioned to believe that the dominant group has an innate advantage.

Another issue that came up in the focus groups was whether there were any significant differences in how the groups with facilitators from different racial-ethnic backgrounds than the majority of group members interacted and how this interaction occurs in the world. In other words, the members were asked if they observe the same patterns of group behavior in the focus groups that they observed in society? The answers were mixed. To some extent, they saw the same patterns of how the white facilitator, and those who possessed the preferred attributes, assumed power, privilege, and authority in the group in the same way that it happens in society, but in the focus groups, they point out it was more tempered due to the nature of the nurturing purpose of the church. Whereas power and authority relationships in the society tend to be absolute and dismissive of cultural differences, in the focus groups the power and authority dynamics tended to be more sensitive to these distinctions. One example of this difference occurred in the white majority group led by the black facilitator. One of the white males in the group, was struggling to understand an issue related to white privilege. The other whites in the group were critical and dismissive of this individual believing he was ignorant and closed-minded. However, the black facilitator ultimately helped enlighten the white group member and

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<sup>54</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 108.



was much more sensitive to how unconsciously blind some whites are when it comes to accepting and understanding their privileged position in America. The minority facilitator in the group was able to provide more insight into exposing this phenomena than the other white group members who themselves may have been struggling to fully understand the effects and manifestations of white privileged. The focus groups were different from society in that way.

Finally, the groups dealt with whether the group's racial-ethnic cultural mix had a positive or negative impact on the effectiveness of the group in meeting its purpose. Most believed that diversity aided the group in providing alternate perspectives on how they can support and encourage one another in the church's mission to be a multicultural church with multicultural leadership. Most agreed that the purpose of the focus groups made it possible for group members to examine the importance cultural diversity and more easily collaborate on ways we can overcome the factors that typically keep people of different racial-ethnic backgrounds apart. This final observation reminds me of what McRae and Short conclude, "Members have a right to make choices that are grounded in their own cultural traditions that may be very different for the group worker [facilitator] and other members."<sup>55</sup>

### **Intercultural Group Conflict**

The members of the focus groups had to struggle with issues that many would try to avoid—issues of race and racism. As I reflected on these struggles I was reminded of the psychoanalytic concepts in group relations theory that comprise unconscious functioning in groups referred to as splitting, projection, and projective identification. According to McRae and Short, "The central psychoanalytic concepts that are drawn on in understanding unconscious

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<sup>55</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 18.

functioning in group relations theory are splitting, projection, and projective identification.”<sup>56</sup>

Splitting is the process by which individuals divide things up into good and bad. Then the individual projects the bad unto the “other” person, who then internalizes it and it becomes a part of his or her projective identity. This unconscious defense mechanism at the group level is identified as ethnocentrism, which is defined as the tendency to look at the world from the perspective of one’s own culture.<sup>57</sup> One way to identify and correct this phenomenon is to help people see that there are other perspectives in the world that are just as valid as their own. Furthermore, it should be expected that people from different geographical and cultural locations will have different ways of understanding and doing things. Rather than diminish the validity of someone’s perspective, we can learn to appreciate our different ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

I could definitely see that these defense mechanisms that people resort to in group settings were at work in the various focus group members. Each member had their own way of dealing with the anxiety that people experience when they decide to join the groups—even if it is the church. Consistent with group dynamics in racially and culturally mixed groups, the leader, as well as the members, each experienced “intense feelings and desires which they projected onto other members and which served to decrease their feelings of anxiety”<sup>58</sup> It is certainly possible that the group facilitators and other members unconsciously split the group into an us vs. them dichotomy to manage their feelings of anxiety. The facilitators may have viewed those instances where they had to interrupt or cut-off group members from sharing as episodes of intergroup conflict which had to be eliminated. Unconsciously, in those moments, they may have

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<sup>56</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 60.

<sup>58</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 59.

viewed themselves as “the good” and therefore justified in their characterizations of the other group member as “the bad” and eliminated what they perceived as being out of order.

Understanding these defense mechanisms in groups is critical in understanding how people in church settings may deal with anxiety.

As pointed out above, members of the focus groups may have projected their own unacceptable desires and impulses onto facilitators from different ethnic-racial groups. According to McRae and Short, “As with splitting, the quality of projection related to race and culture within groups is intricately tied to societal attitudes, expectations, prejudices, and stereotypes...”<sup>59</sup> Projective identity is an unconscious process of living out or becoming what others project unto an individual. The projection becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, which is also known as internalized oppression. In the church this can keep people of different nationalities from coming together because on an unconscious level, they are experiencing distrust and ambivalence. Although projection occurs at an unconscious level, overcoming the stereotypes and negative emotions that are superimposed on the minds of those who are the object of these projections, must occur at the conscious level.<sup>60</sup> One example of projective identity is when people of color internalize prejudice and thus, become their own worst enemies. It is easy to see how racial-ethnic minorities can develop low expectations for themselves as a direct result of the low expectations placed on them by society (the dominant group). In the same way, when society has high expectations, as in the case of the dominant group, these individuals develop high expectations for themselves. The same phenomenon occurs in the church. These attitudes have the power to influence the behavior of church members as they utilize the same defense mechanism that exist in society.

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<sup>59</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 62.

The racial-ethnic members of the focus groups, to some extent, probably internalized the projections from the dominant group in American society. It will take much intentional work to prevent this defense mechanism from destroying our efforts to unite our faith community. It is interesting that projective identification causes people of color to internalize the very undesirable, prejudicial attitudes from the dominant group they despise most. The focus groups at SPCC showed us how even in the church people of color can suffer from projective identity crisis. We must support our members of color by recognizing that they may be internalizing the bad qualities that society at large projects onto them and we must reject using those qualities as the standard for judging each other. As McRae and Short point out, “Projective identification occurring in a racial-cultural context at the group level is often a microcosm of what occurs in society.”<sup>61</sup>

## **Chapter Four: Implications for Pastoral Leadership**

### **The New Testament Church**

No view of the church in the New Testament is more instructive for how the church is supposed to look and operate than the one given by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation. In this passage John shares a vision of the church, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...”<sup>62</sup> What a beautiful picture of the church. This vision can become reality through intercultural competence education, learning, and practices. God’s vision for the church is that the church go to the ends of the earth in order to reach out to the people of all nations. Perhaps no other time in the history of the world has this more possible

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<sup>61</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 63.

<sup>62</sup> Revelation 7:9 (NIV).

than today. Multiculturalism is a fact of American life. The Church in America is in the unique position to not only being able to embrace it, but also to perfect intercultural communication through intentional pursuits that forge the kinds of relationships where all people feel valued and welcomed no matter where they are from geographically.

Unfortunately, many churches prefer their mono-cultural experience and do not want to change. However, the choice to remain mono-cultural is proving to be the demise of churches around the country. Change is inevitable. In order for churches to thrive in a multicultural world, God's universal decree requires that we find ways to work together. Our motivation must be based on the word of God. Multiculturalism should not be tolerated, it should be sought after and appreciated. Multiculturalism is more than just bringing people together of different nationalities, it is having an affinity for inclusiveness and desiring intercultural exchange and togetherness. The Church of this new era in which we live should have two important distinctions when it comes to multiculturalism: 1) a multicultural church should be a church in which each cultural group is able to engage and embody their cultural norms, rather than everyone trying to conform to the Western way of doing church: 2) instead of each group only coming together to make their needs known to the other groups, as is often the case when representatives from minority groups have access to the governing bodies, each will recognize the overarching objective to pursue our common interests over our distinct interests. I recognize that this may sound idealistic, but I believe that genuine multicultural ministry can only be achieved when we realize the universal call of God's business to unite the world. Though this comes with many formidable challenges, nevertheless, it is worth the effort. To realize this dream at SPCC, we must be willing to adopt a paradigm shift in how we understand our mission.

### **Pedagogy of Love and Mutuality**

At the heart of intercultural conflict are cultural indifference, prejudice and ethnocentrism. If our goals are to achieve intercultural competence in our faith community, and to improve intercultural exchanges, then certain benchmarks must characterize our pedagogical approach. According to Elizabeth Condo-Frazier, in her article entitled, “Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Radically Just World,” education should be committed to the development of a curriculum that addresses the whole person as a member of the community and should be transformative or liberational in its thrust.<sup>63</sup> I believe the same should be true for the Church. She continues, an effective curriculum must take account of the “students and their context, the teacher, and the framework that holds the curriculum together.”<sup>64</sup> Although Condo-Frazier wants to transform theological educational institutions, her ideas would also transform the Church. For example, her reflection that theology should be emancipatory, integrated (vertically—introductory to advanced, horizontally—making connections between subjects, and diagonally—integration of the unintentional processes of life), empowering, and acculturative for students in the practice of justice, and that it must develop performance skills and intercultural competency is also true for the church.<sup>65</sup> The theological doctrines that teach love for one’s neighbor are the key to developing the skills that will make SPCC a culturally competent church. Our goal will be to develop a theological understanding among members that engages people of different cultures in activities that respect differences and encourage mutual cooperation. We want to adopt a new way of thinking about the theology of community taught by Jesus and His

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<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Condo-Frazier, “Thoughts on Curriculum as Formational Praxis for Faculty, Students, and their Communities” in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Condo-Frazier, “Thoughts on Curriculum as Formational Praxis,” 128.

<sup>65</sup> Condo-Frazier, “Thoughts on Curriculum as Formational Praxis.”

disciples. Theology should be a pedagogy of love and communal mutual respect for each other. As Condo-Frazier points out, “It is a theology done as community where persons seek to define God, themselves, and their purpose in the world as a community and not as individuals.”<sup>66</sup>

The shift from individualism to community is an integral part of developing intercultural competence. For this to happen at SPCC our members must recognize the importance of letting go of tradition and embracing change. We must be willing to learn about each other’s culture, and be aware of our own culture. We must become students of intercultural competence. Another author whose understanding of theological education lines up with the principles of teaching intercultural competence in the church is Archie Smith Junior. In the Prolegomenon to his chapter entitled, “You Cannot Teach What You Do Not Know,” he identifies knowledge of “fellow students and self-awareness” as one of the critical components in student learning.<sup>67</sup> People learn culture not only from their own personal experience, but also through the experiences of others. In faith communities, those who are taught are as valuable to the community as those who do the teaching. One aim of intercultural competence is to engage our faith community in authentic multicultural experience. To this end, Smith Jr. further adds, “If we are, as Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us, ‘wrapped in a single garment of destiny,’ then we are destined to be co-learners with and teachers of one another.”<sup>68</sup> This certainly has to be true of the church if we are to survive and thrive in these challenging, but turbulent times.

To forge the kind of community we crave at SPCC, we must be willing to make sacrifices. The sharing of ourselves and learning to appreciate what we get from others are

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<sup>66</sup> Condo-Frazier, “Thoughts on Curriculum as Formational Praxis,” 136.

<sup>67</sup> Archie Smith Jr., “You Cannot Teach What You Do Not Know” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 88.

<sup>68</sup> Smith Jr., “You Cannot Teach What You Do Not Know,” 89.

critical. We cannot escape the realities of the multicultural world in which we live. Smith Jr. categorizes it this way,

If it is the case that life itself is an ongoing learning experiment, then there is a broad sense in which we are co-learners and teachers in a wider world and in a classroom without walls. We are challenged to build a safer world and share resources in the one world and planet we have in common... Culture, in this interpretation, is both in us—i.e. a part of us—and around us in much the same way as water surrounds the fish of the sea.<sup>69</sup>

The sharing of resources is critical to a genuine pedagogy of empowerment. Without a sense of empowerment, the different groups that make-up our faith community cannot truly be free to express and live out their culture in a safe environment. Intercultural competence leads to equal representation at the table and it must become one of the hallmarks of our faith community.

Another important ingredient in developing intercultural competency is communication. Language not only helps people define culture, but it also shapes culture. For B. Blount, in his article entitled, “Center and Margins,” this happens because “people in different sociological environments operate with different linguistic forms and because that meaning derived from language is also shaped by context.”<sup>70</sup> It is sometimes puzzling how something can mean one thing in one language, and something entirely different in another. One way we are bridging the language gap at SPCC is through the use of translation devices and language specific materials. This allows bilingual members to participate in the life of our faith community, which we hope will minimize the acculturation stress that can result from the everyday challenges of being bicultural. Bilingual representatives on our leadership team will play an essential role in bridging the gaps between cultures. Not only will they make it possible to bridge the gaps for non-English

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<sup>69</sup> Smith Jr., “You Cannot Teach What You Do Not Know,” 89.

<sup>70</sup> B. Blount, “Center and Margins” in *Teaching the Bible: Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, eds. Fernando F Segovia and Mary A. Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 18.



speaking members of their respective groups, but they will also be effective in representing their views and perspectives in the pursuit of our common interests.

One of the biggest obstacles to cultural competency is racial and cultural prejudice, along with contempt prior to investigation. For most of its legacy, the Christian Church (DOC) has been an institution immensely shaped and entrenched in Western hegemony. Although the world has become increasingly more culturally diverse, it has also become increasingly more contentious and divisive. I agree with what Eleazar Fernandez said in his article entitled, “Multifaith Context and Competencies,” where he says,

What we really need is a sense of belonging in which our distinctive difference is respected and taken seriously as our contribution to the whole, not taken as a threat. When a society has learned to honor and respect the dignity of difference of its members, the whole is enriched.<sup>71</sup>

To make SPCC a safe place for community and camaraderie, we must commit to being a catalyst in the process of finding ways to bring healing and connection on all sides. It is critical that we identify and begin deconstructing white Christian hegemony in our faith community. If we are not diligent in our efforts to examine our worship practices and church polity for the purpose of weeding-out hegemonic attitudes and traditions, we run the risk of perpetuating the systems of society that isolate and oppress people of color. According to McRae and Short, “A reluctance to explore and discuss racial-cultural factors can lead to the development of curricula [programs and policies] and training models that are etic and ethnocentric in content.”<sup>72</sup> This is perhaps our most formidable challenge.

Deciphering the colonial hegemonic influences in Western Christianity is not an easy job. Many westerners take for granted the theology and religious practices handed down by the

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<sup>71</sup> Eleazar Fernandez, “Multifaith Context and Competencies” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 18.

<sup>72</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, xiii.

Church fathers to axiomatic and objective. W.H. Myers, in his article entitled, “African Americans and the Academy,” characterizes it in this way, “This Eurocentric hold on the Bible and its interpretation further reflects the broader Eurocentric control exercised over the political, economic, and social systems of a culture, including its charter documents and the norms for their interpretation.”<sup>73</sup> SPCC must recognize that the church fathers, who gave westerners their theology, like all people, saw things through their cultural lenses and that consequently, their interpretation of biblical texts were colored by their culturally specific perception. We must come to realize that no theology is done objectively, it is always cast in the understanding of those who write it and colored by their inherited imaginations. Kathleen O’ Connor, in her article entitled, “Crossing Borders: Biblical Studies in a Trans-Cultural World,” sees it this way, “Because texts are embedded in ‘regimes of reason,’ that is, in the political, economic, social, and religious worlds that produce them, all texts serve the interests of their creators, just as all interpretation serve the interests of their producers.”<sup>74</sup> She goes on to say, “Recognition that texts and interpretation function rhetorically in service of power, of course, requires critical suspicion of both texts and interpretations.”<sup>75</sup>

## **Chapter Five: A New Model for Church Leadership**

### **Current Leadership Model**

The leadership team at SPCC is comprised of seven individuals, including the pastor, the chairperson of the board, the treasurer, and four elders. These seven individuals meet bi-monthly

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<sup>73</sup> William H. Myers, “African Americans and the Academy” in *Teaching the Bible: Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary A. Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>74</sup> Kathleen O’Connor, “Crossing Borders: Biblical Studies in a Trans-Cultural World,” in *Teaching the Bible: Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary A. Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 322.

<sup>75</sup> O’Connor, “Crossing Borders,” 322.

to discuss the business of the church: casting vision, planning, use of resources, new ministries, programs, polity, and handling any problems that may arise in our day-to-day affairs. It is a critical branch of our church infrastructure because we determine the direction and character of our worship service, liturgy, praise music, agendas, outreach, education, building plans, ceremonies, and our brand in the community. For this group to function optimally, and represent all the ethnic-racial groups in our church, it must reflect the cultural and generational diversity in our faith community at large. The pie-chart below represents the racial-ethnic mix and consequent power structure of SPCC's current leadership team.

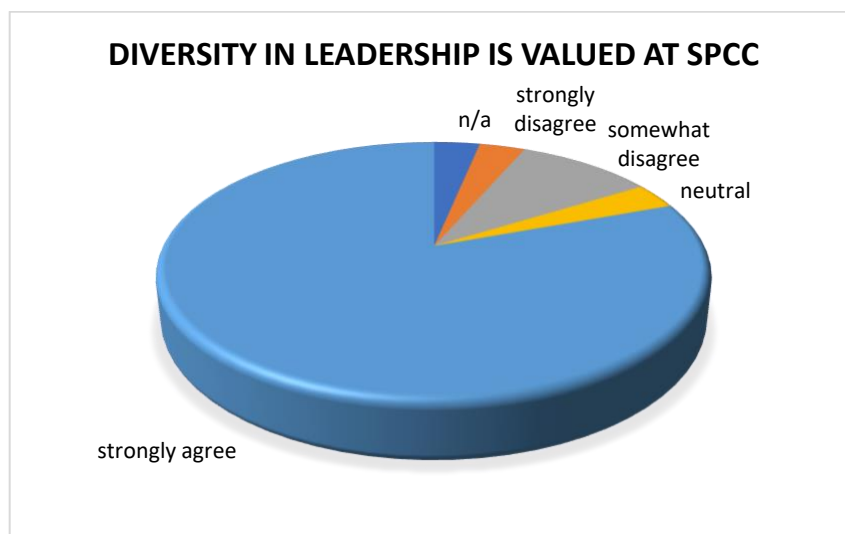


***Exhibit 5: SPCC Ethnic-Racial Leadership Diversity***

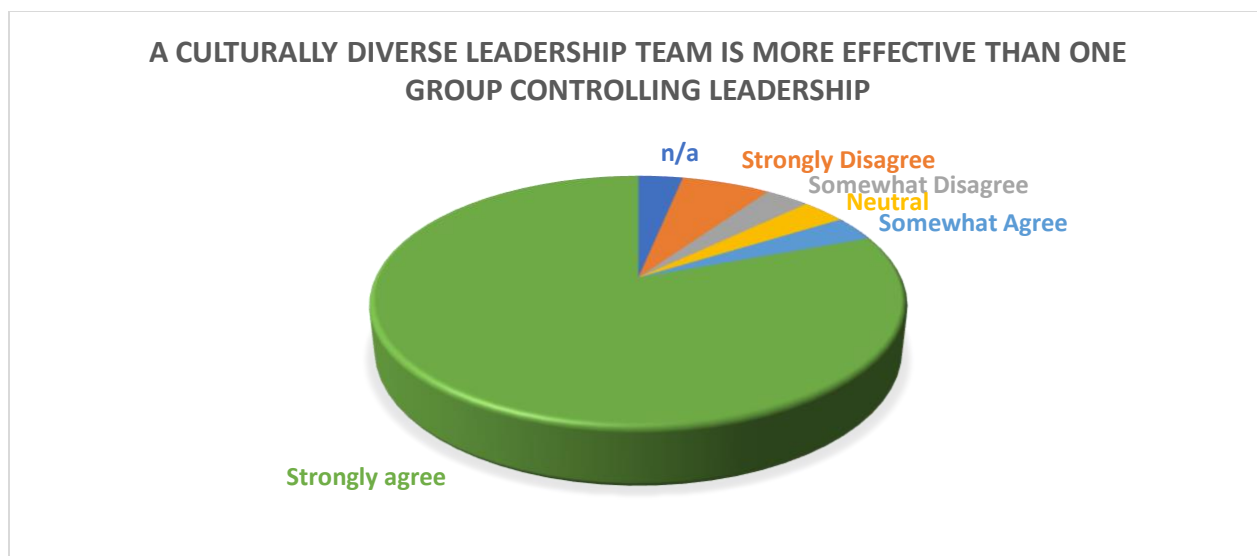
From the chart it is clear that whites at SPCC have a disproportionate majority on the leadership team, with Chinese, Koreans, and blacks in the minority while Filipinos and Latinx are not represented at all. The actual numbers on the team are four whites, one black, one Korean, and one Chinese. Although the leadership team represents most of our faith community, it does not include the voices of all racial-ethnic groups and still provides a considerable voting advantage to whites. Furthermore, the white majority is a significant factor when it comes to voting on church business that reflects cultural perspectives. The current composition maintains

a status quo that is decidedly influenced by Western tradition, thought, and ways of doing church.

Fortunately, the leadership team at SPCC, as well as the congregation at large, recognize this disparity and are willing to make changes. The questionnaires revealed that most members of SPCC value cultural and generational diversity in our leadership and want to see it be more representative of our multicultural faith community. It is not surprising that our younger members also want to see the team include individuals from their age-groups as well. Below, when we discuss how age impacts the leadership paradigm at SPCC, we will consider the implications of a growing younger population on our leadership decisions. When asked whether they valued cultural and generational diversity in our leadership team and whether they thought a diversified leadership team is more effective, the overwhelming majority of our congregation answered affirmative to both questions (see pie-charts below).



***Exhibit 6: SPCC Values Diversity Leadership***



***Exhibit 7: SPCC Diversity in Leadership Effectiveness***

According to research done by McRae and Short, two important considerations emerge from culturally diverse teams or groups: a sense of belonging and trust.<sup>76</sup> When all racial-ethnic groups in the church believe their voices are being heard and that their needs are being considered at the top, they are more inclined to feel included and consequently are more trusting of the decisions being made by the leadership team. When this occurs, McRae and Short point out that the group becomes a mature working group, which “is a stage in the group’s development in which members openly share, discuss, and work on problems or concerns that are goals of the group.”<sup>77</sup> This “working group” is a picture of the church and embodies our common goal and commission given by God is to share His unconditional love with a world that desperately needs it. This kind of leadership team can be the catalyst for a paradigm shift that seeks to include all groups in the life of our faith community. The research shows that multicultural leadership is valued at SPCC so the work of bringing it into fruition must begin.

<sup>76</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 134.

<sup>77</sup> McRae and Short, *Racial and Cultural Dynamics in Group and Organizational Life*, 132.

### **The Diversity Syndicate**

The main goal of this research project is to develop a culturally diverse leadership team that I have termed a “Diversity Syndicate.” The Diversity Syndicate that I am proposing is a multicultural ministry team charged with promoting intercultural competency through alliances and networks that support a pedagogy of shared power with a consortium of people from all social locations regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, social class, sexual identity, language, nationality, physical ability, or geography. This ministry team will join together people from all racial-ethnic backgrounds within our faith community for the purpose of establishing liturgical practices and polity that develop and reinforce intercultural competence. This new approach taken by the Diversity Syndicate will transform our leadership team into a group of individuals responsible for helping to promote multicultural exchanges and mutual respect for cultural differences. The syndicate team will give all groups in our faith community voice in the important endeavor of creating a loving space where people from all walks of life can gather together at the table. Intercultural competence is an integral part of the paradigm-shift needed for our faith community to thrive in the multicultural milieu in which we live and this new leadership model is the key to meeting this objective. The Diversity Syndicate will function the way a syndicates functions in society. A syndicate is a group of individuals or organizations combined to promote some common interests. This new model of ministry leadership will allow SPCC to promote intercultural competence, our common interests, and our overall church vision and mission.

The Diversity Syndicate will operate from a praxis of love as our pedagogical guideline, and will seek to engage our faith community in the discovery of their own cultural heritage while they learn about the culture of others. One central ingredient in intercultural competence is

recognizing how culture impacts religion. Shanta Premawardhana in her article entitled, “Public Ministry in a World of Many Faiths,” gives valuable advice for learning to appreciate how religion affects people from different backgrounds when she says, “We need to deconstruct those theologies that create barriers to our engagement with each other, and reconstruct theologies that enable us to learn from other religious traditions the wisdom they have to offer, and about how we can work together.”<sup>78</sup> We must recognize that people from different cultures may have different religious views that can enrich our leadership team and our understanding of church governance in ways traditional Western views of Christianity cannot.

Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook, speaking on cultural competency says, “the ability to recognize and respond to varying aspects of cultural difference, including religious differences, and to have the capacity to maintain relationships across differences is needed for authentic religious pluralism.”<sup>79</sup> Cultural competence means taking the time to understand how the different religious perspectives that characterize the unique aspects of different racial-ethnic cultures of our faith community can inform our leadership. Many members at SPCC come from countries where religious traditions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam are practiced by the majority. Individuals in our faith community from countries where these religious traditions are predominant can teach us to ask different questions, pursue different outcomes, and expand our understanding about ways we can reach out across religions to reach people for Christ. The Chinese members of SPCC, for example, bring a rich heritage of ancient wisdom through proverbial sayings and teachings. From their experiences we can see into the minds of our Chinese brothers and sisters and discover what we have in common. Greater sensitivity to

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<sup>78</sup> Shanta Premawardhana, “Public Ministry in a World of Many Faiths,” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2014) 177.

<sup>79</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxii.

cultural distinctions can only aide us in our pursuit to grow the family of God. Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook also adds that, “Cultural competence with religious literacy is the outcome of engaging a multi-level process of education and change built in cultural awareness.”<sup>80</sup>

In the Appendix of her work referenced above, Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook introduces what she refers to as an *Interreligious Transformation Continuum for Christian Congregations and Organizations*.<sup>81</sup> In column format, she describes six theological positions a congregation or organization may hold with respect to intercultural competence and interreligious engagement:

- 1.) Exclusivist—excludes people of other religions.
- 2.) Inclusivist—believes Christianity is the fulfillment of other religions.
- 3.) Compliant—supports religious pluralism, but still holds to Christianity.
- 4.) Pluralist—sees doctrinal differences as barriers to engagement with other religions.
- 5.) Redefining/multiple religious—desire to become an interfaith community.
- 6.) Transformed/interfaith community—religious differences no longer limit potential.

I would describe SPCC as a church in transformation from a category two organization, an inclusivist/religious tolerance theological position church, that is slowly moving toward becoming a category three faith community. SPCC supports diversity in religious thought; one of our common beliefs across the denomination is that people have a right to decide for themselves what they wish to believe. How long it takes us to become a category six faith community is not certain, but we definitely recognize the importance of respecting, honoring, learning from, and appreciating the multiple religious backgrounds of our congregation and surrounding communities.

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<sup>80</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxii.

<sup>81</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, 167.



The guidelines below, are adapted from Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook's interreligious learning and cultural competency literacy measures.<sup>82</sup> They provide a blueprint for SPCC to develop interreligious learning and cultural competency. These strategies will serve as benchmarks for the Diversity Syndicate in its task to transform the hearts and minds of our faith community. Intercultural competency is foundational to the paradigm shift needed to guide the syndicate in developing a praxis of appreciation and respect for cultural differences and help us to meet the challenge to give equal voice to all of our racial-ethnic groups. The following guidelines will be instrumental in achieving these goals:

### **1.) Get in touch with one's own culture.**

The first step to getting in touch with one's culture is recognizing the importance of culture in the lives of others. Although in America, regardless of their racial-ethnic identity, people may have similar cultural interests, this does not make us all the same, nor does it mean we want to give-up our own culture for someone else's culture. The idea of a "melting pot" of all nationalities in which people are assimilated into American culture, fails to acknowledge that people have social identities and cultural histories that they do not want to abandon. Today there are new metaphors that take multicultural approaches which are much more conducive with the immigrants' desire to retain their culture, rather than assimilate into the melting-pot of American culture. The idea that the diversity in this country can be pictured as a "cultural salad bowl" or a "cultural mosaic" introduces the idea that it is good to keep one's culture. As pointed out by authors Paul Smokowski and Martica Bacallao, in their book entitled, *Becoming Bicultural: Risk, Resilience, and Latino Youth*, "In this newer multicultural approach, each 'ingredient' retains its

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<sup>82</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxii.

integrity and flavor while contributing to a successful final product.<sup>83</sup> Immigrants should not have to lose their cultural identity and assimilate into the dominant culture to be included in American life. Although this should be obvious, Smokowski and Bacallao point out that it was an “intense shock” for most white Americans to discover that this country’s diverse immigrant population had feelings of nationalism.<sup>84</sup> Today, biculturalism is the pride of immigrants as it should be. Unity does not have to mean uniformity. People can be respected for their culture and respected for their desire to learn a new culture. The kind of awareness of one’s own culture that leads to esteem of other cultures will be a key objective for the Diversity Syndicate.

Another idea to enhance one’s understanding of his or her own culture is through sharing stories. It is interesting to hear the stories of how family traditions and cultural traits were established and the history behind them. Most people can probably think of something from their cultural backgrounds that they remember as being unique, either to their family or to their cultural heritage in general. Just as sometimes people experience feelings of anxiety, fear, awkwardness, and discomfort when it comes to sharing religious differences, sometimes people experience those same feelings when it comes to sharing about cultural differences. Sharing life stories is one way to ease the tension and provide a platform for linking personal experiences with one’s faith and culture. According to Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, in her book entitled, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*, “Story-linking is a process whereby Christian education participants connect components of their everyday life stories with the Christian faith story found in Scripture.”<sup>85</sup> This is an important practice because it can help members of racial-

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<sup>83</sup> Paul R. Smokowski and Martica Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural: Risk, Resilience, and Latino Youth* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 22.

<sup>84</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 28.

ethnic groups identify with Bible stories which are often cast in Western settings. Being able to relate one's culture to Bible stories and to see oneself in Bible stories helps people to see themselves as creatures made in the image of God. Although whites see Bible stories through a westerner's lens, people of color see them through a variety of other lenses. Bible stories may have one meaning for westerners and mean something entirely different to people of other cultures. A critical element in forging greater fellowship between the different groups that make-up our faith community is the ability to imagine and allow other cultures to be included in our understanding of Bible stories.

Western Christianity is deeply entranced in the dominant group's culture. Therefore, differentiating between 1st century culture and western culture is the first step to recognizing one's own culture in Bible stories. Theological perspectives are always connected to cultural perspectives. Consequently, Western Christianity and theology are intrinsically tied to the male centric culture and perspectives of the church fathers, who were primarily from Rome and surrounding its cities. In "What Shall We Teach; The Content of Theological Education," author Willie Jennings agrees that, "theological education in the modern Western academy was not built with different bodies in mind or with due consideration of different minds in diverse bodies."<sup>86</sup> Intercultural competence with religious literacy necessitates that each person and each faith community develop an understanding about their culture and awareness of how religion is impacted by culture.

Last year SPCC began to celebrate "All Cultures Day" as an annual event at our morning worship service. On this day, everyone wears an outfit and brings food reflecting their cultural heritage. The different styles of dress and foods have rich historic meanings. The tradition behind

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<sup>86</sup> Willie James Jennings, "What Shall We Teach; The Content of Theological Education" in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 109.

each of the various customs and values is often fascinating. When we recognize that every culture, just like every “body” is loved by God and included in the Bible, we make great strides in our endeavors to enrich our communal ties and cultural exchanges. This year church members devoted more time to the study of their respective cultures and put together outfits and dishes that reflected a distinct aspect of their culture. We anticipate that every year this day of cultural exchange will increase in fan fair as we grow in our understanding of our own cultures and learn about the culture of others. This event goes a long way toward breaking down the cultural walls that divide people and building confidence to share more about one’s cultural heritage.

**2.) “Know the difference between race, religion, ethnicity and culture and be able to apply this knowledge within community contexts.”<sup>87</sup>**

Although most would agree that profiling can lead to negative stereotypes, it is still a prevalent practice around the world. Almost without consideration, many categorize others based on stereotypes about their race and religion. Using just these two characteristics, race and religion, some people feel they can make judgements about a person’s character. But more information is needed to avoid labeling and running the risk of offending them. Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook points out that,

Religion is but one of many different dimensions of culture which constitute the social identities of the people who comprise our local communities. Other forms of identity, including race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, age, etc., work together and constitute the profiles of members of our religious communities.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxii.

<sup>88</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxii.

The city of South Pasadena is experiencing a population boom in its Chinese citizens. As more Chinese members become a part of our faith community, the need for intercultural competence takes on more urgency. The Chinese members of our faith community have shared many of their traditions and holiday seasons with us and have become an integral part of our faith community. They have invited distinguished guests to perform Chinese customs and practices to our church gatherings and they are always eager to prepare meals at festive celebrations. Our Latinx members also contribute to our montage of cultural displays, distinct practices and customs. Our Latinx population remind us of the issues in our country related to unfair immigration policies and the need to assist those entering our country looking for better opportunities. Our Korean population is also growing and accordingly, we have seen great and interesting cultural contributions on their part as well. We have a mixed group of musicians including a Filipino praise leader and representatives from all other groups in our faith community: Koreans, Chinese, Latinx, whites and blacks who all come together for our services. With much diversity, it is incumbent upon us to be careful that we do not use stereotypes or discriminatory labeling mechanisms that can isolate and divide our faith community.

At this time in our church history we are in the position to become even more culturally fluent. As we continue to see immigrants coming from the Far East and across the southern border, our faith community needs a more structured approach to intercultural competence. This kind of change requires a strategy to share power and decision making in order to empower all members of our church in the pursuit of our common interests and mission. The Diversity Syndicate will help our faith community continue to develop and implement practices that foster intercultural dialogue and cooperation. We must work to ensure our intercultural competence education strives to impress upon all members the difference between race, religion, ethnicity

and culture. We are working to redefine our vision and to move toward developing cross-cultural exchanges. As people of different cultures learn to respect and work together for the kingdom of God, we experience the love and togetherness that He intended should characterize our community.

As Mary Hess points out in her article entitled, “Designing Curricular Approaches for Interfaith Competency or Why Does Learning How to Live in a ‘Community of Communities’ Matter,” a work that expressly deals with the enigma often associated with following-up strong words with action, “a school [or faith community] that explicitly affirms its openness to engaging ‘the neighbor’ but offers no way for students [or parishioners] to learn about and develop relationships with their neighbors, is posing a conundrum.”<sup>89</sup> She cites the standing criticism of faith communities that talk about “loving one’s neighbor” but who in actuality diminish the possibilities of this happening. Consequently, many have accused the church of being hypocritical due to the mismatch between the explicit assertions of community and the inferences about the lack of evidence for such a claim. One of the top aims of the Diversity Syndicate is to engage our faith community in the work that will bridge relationships between the people of different cultures. We want to be a faith community that practices what it preaches. The words of apostle John must become reality, “Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Mary Hess, “Designing Curricular Approaches for Interfaith Competency or Why Does Learning How to Live in a ‘Community of Communities’ Matter” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2014) 38.

<sup>90</sup> 1 John 3:18 (NIV).

### **3.) Recognition of cultural particularities as a critical element in building relationship.**

This is an interesting guideline in that it asks faith community members to consider how the very things that make its members different can be used to work towards our common interests. Although this guideline specifically considers the implications of religious differences, the same holds true for cultural differences. Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook points out that, “While there are some similarities among different religious groups [and cultures], authentic religious [and cultural] cooperation is not built on denying the reality or importance of differences, but rather on the acknowledgement of difference and commitment to build relationships with that recognition as given.”<sup>91</sup> Just as some people undermine the important distinctions between different religions by claiming all religions are the same and lead to the same God, some people make the same mistake by asserting all people are the same regardless of cultural differences. These kinds of stereotypes are never helpful and have the potential to de-value the real cultural differences that makes us better and stronger when we work together. What we have discovered at SPCC is that our differences complement each other in a way that shores up our weaknesses and brings out our strengths.

Justus Baird, author of “Pursuing and Teaching Justice in Multifaith Contexts,” makes an enlightening observation about the relationship between multifaith engagement, politics, and culture, when he says, “Multifaith engagement is always entangled in cultural and political contexts.”<sup>92</sup> His reflection has strong implications for developing intercultural competence in our faith community. Effective cross-cultural education for the purpose of empowering and engaging people of different social locations must involve consideration for the political contexts

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<sup>91</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxiii.

<sup>92</sup> Justus Baird, “Pursuing and Teaching Justice in Multifaith Contexts” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, ed. Eleazar Fernandez (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 91.

surrounding the different cultures of the community. For example, the political implications of Arab suffering around the world at the hands of radical fundamentalists and the terrorism perpetrated by these individuals around the world will be important topics in forging relations with our Arab brother and sisters. Increasing tensions around immigration issues will be an important political issue in cultural exchanges with our Hispanic brothers and sisters. Maybe our brothers and sisters of these groups have family members caught in the cross-hairs or maybe they themselves are struggling against political persecution. The politics of the world make intercultural competence a matter of urgency in today's multicultural faith communities. Understanding political contexts and how politics impact people of color is an essential part in helping bicultural members of our faith communities cope with acculturation stress.

According to Smokowski and Bacallao, "It is equally important to support the cultural strengths and assets that families bring with them when they immigrate. To this end, a second body of research shifts the focus from thinking of assimilation as a risk factor to considering an individual's or a family's cultural assets as factors that promote positive encounters."<sup>93</sup> Members at SPCC from cultural backgrounds that experience oppression and poverty in this country will be empowered by the Diversity Syndicate and they will be great assets as they bring their strength and experience to the table. Many may become powerful advocates in the greater community for justice and social fairness abroad. Recognition of the cultural assets that each group brings to our faith community is a necessary initiative for intercultural learning and authentic engagement. One of our goals for intercultural competence will be to assist individuals and families in the process of becoming, "fully bicultural: having the ability to switch between cultural schemes, norms, and behaviors in response to cultural cues in any given situation."<sup>94</sup> We

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<sup>93</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 186.

<sup>94</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 11.



want our bicultural members to know we recognize the difficulties of learning a new culture while trying to grapple with all the challenges of daily life in a new country. We want to be sensitive to the ways that our society hampers biculturalism and pushes immigrants to assimilate, rather than acculturate into the Western world. To do this, we must recognize the value of listening and respecting cultural differences.

**4.) Recognize that no specific group has the right to dominate through cultural hegemony.**

This guideline, in its original form, deals with the fact that, “there are multiple centers of truth, whose legitimacy is often determined by the amount of power any given perspective may have in a particular context.”<sup>95</sup> In Christianity, for example, the tendency to view all “other” religious traditions as false, and one’s own religious tradition as possessing the “only” truth, is a common feature of exclusivist dogma. Just as people in the process of gaining interreligious learning need religious literacy to recognize that people in other religious traditions view their faiths as also having truth, in a similar way, people in the process of acquiring intercultural competence, have to learn that no specific group’s culture should dictate norms or possess all legitimate power in faith communities. For example, the way in which people from different cultural backgrounds celebrate holidays should be determined by their own customs and practices—we should not have a standard approach that applies to everyone. Some cultures recognize holidays that others do not. We can all work together to respect our cultural differences without demanding conformity to a single standard.

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<sup>95</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxiii.

However, the matter of ending racial discrimination and dismantling the power imbalances requires more than simple talk. Jennifer Harvey notes in her book entitled, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*, that,

It is relatively easy, in our post-civil rights era, for white Christians to speak with passion about the sin of racism and to morally condemn the ways structural injustice in U.S. society continues to impact communities of color...racial alienation will continue to be the most salient characteristic of the relationship between whites and communities of color, both in the church and in the nation beyond.<sup>96</sup>

To overcome the challenges that divide the different cultures in faith communities and in society, decisive action must be taken. We cannot simply wish racial tension away or ignore its consequences. The relationships we wish to create through our Diversity Syndicate do not come from idle words and wishful thinking. The work demands a determined effort over the long-term.

The problem of white hegemony in the church makes it difficult for people of color to worship and experience the kind of fellowship that Jesus intended faith communities to experience. This alienation has led to Sunday being the most segregated day on the calendar. Harvey also points out that, “If whiteness is the central reality in the existence of racial injustice, then being able to name, analyze, and deconstruct it is necessary in working toward justice.”<sup>97</sup> Perhaps, what may be difficult for white members of our faith community and faith communities around the country to accept is that the current power structure, where Western cultural hegemony is the norm and in which whites have control over the resources, has to be deconstructed before true power sharing in a multicultural faith community can be experienced. In my tenure with SPCC, I have witnessed exceptional cooperation on the part of our white

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<sup>96</sup> Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 157.

<sup>97</sup> Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 11.

parishioners. The first evidence I experienced of this exceptionalism was their creation of a search committee comprised of one white male, two white females, a Latino, and a Chinese male to find a new pastor. After interviewing several candidates (all white), they decided on me, the only African American candidate, and initially, the only African American in the church at the time. The team recounted for me that they had decided that a minority pastor was what they needed to be the multicultural church they all desired to be. Their efforts to integrate the church were intentional and conspired.

As a result, we have a faith community that is progressive; looking to enter into the full measure multicultural fellowship, power sharing, and worship through genuine self-sacrifice and mutual respect of others. According to Mai-Anh Le Tran, author of *Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope*,

Religions that facilitate such faith do not offer dogma; instead they offer narratives that help people make meaning, rituals to intensify human experience, and ethical guides for daily living...In this age of the Spirit, a faith community is redemptive when it teaches people—through the curricula of eating, praying, and loving—how to set their hearts on repairing the broken shards of human situations and systems.<sup>98</sup>

The practice of coming together over a meal to pray, establish friendships, and express our love for each other is a regular activity for our faith community. Every Sunday, following the worship service, we break bread together at our After-Church-Lunch program in our fellowship hall. We started this program as a way to galvanize our time of fellowship together and provide opportunities to share our cultural heritage and experiences. On special occasions we may have lunch prepared by a particular group in our church. For example, typically a team of members from our Latinx group will prepare lunch for Cinco de Mayo and members from our Chinese

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<sup>98</sup> Mai-Anh Le Tran, *Reset the Heart. Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 163.

group will prepare lunch for the Chinese New Year. This kind of fellowship has taken us from just sustaining placid acquaintances to developing long-lasting friendships. The After-Church-Lunch program has had tremendous success. Since it began three years ago, we have seen an increase in the number of people who remain after the service and a growing eagerness on the part of those who participate to socialize together. It is my hope that the Diversity Syndicate will design even more programs that give people opportunities to socialize across cultural boundaries in multicultural settings. Having meals together is an excellent way for the different groups that make-up our faith community to share their culture and customs around food, as well as entertain each other's stories about family affairs and culture specific experiences.

**5.) Cultural competency is a long-term commitment to communication and building relationships within the faith community.**

One thing that I have experienced at SPCC is that nothing happens overnight. Anything worthwhile takes time and commitment. In the three and half years I have been the pastor at SPCC, I have seen my relationships within our faith community, and the relationships of other members, evolve and change. People whom I suspected may not be allies when I began my pastorate at SPCC, in many cases have become my closest collaborators. I watched two people who initially did not get along become best friends. Dr. Kujawa-Holbrook points out that, "As is any change process, building authentic interreligious [and intercultural] cooperation is a long-term process, fraught with mistakes and frustrations as well as joy and celebration."<sup>99</sup> I have also witnessed feuds over cultural preferences and differences of opinion that were laced with racial bias and what Tran defines as "unseen power." She points out that, "Unseen power is

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<sup>99</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders*, xxxiii.

rationalized and legitimized by built-in logics. The architects of power in the United States must create a force that can be felt but not seen. Unseen power remains strong when it remains in the dark; unexposed to the sunlight.”<sup>100</sup> At times the whites at SPCC, knowingly or unknowingly, exert unseen power. For example, a few years ago there was a struggle between some of our older white members and the racial-ethnic majority of our church over the volume and style of the worship music. The older white members, who were also members of the leadership team, wanted a softer, more traditional style of worship music, while the racial-ethnic majority members preferred a louder, more contemporary style of music. Although we ultimately compromised on the style of music, (essentially, we settled on half and half even though only a small minority prefer traditional), the majority white leadership team still voted to replace the traditional drum set we had with electric drums so the volume could be turned down. In the end, the older white members made fewer compromises than the racial-ethnic majority. Fortunately, we have all agreed to and are working toward a multicultural power structure that gives all groups equal voice and power so that in the future conflicts like this one can be resolved more equitably. The dominant group’s culture and definitions of normalcy are reinforced by institutions that sustain and perpetuate white hegemony in the church and in society. Critical to the long-term success of our Diversity Syndicate team will be the identification and the deconstruction of accepted social norms that impede cultural empowerment and equity for all groups.

Although our faith community has not seen not any violence between our multicultural groups, the tactics of violence are embedded in the power-relationships that people acquire and are subject to in society.<sup>101</sup> We are aware of the increased level of violence in our country and

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<sup>100</sup> Tran, *Reset the Heart*, 26.

<sup>101</sup> Tran, *Reset the Heart*.

around the world and how it impacts people in a sub-conscious way. According to two cultural theorists, “the violence in the U.S. is in the thick of what they have termed, conjuncture: a period in which different elements of society come together to produce a unique fusion of economic, social, political, ideological, and cultural in relative settlement that becomes hegemonic in defining reality.”<sup>102</sup> The result of a process that stripes away the ability to think critically about issues related to culture and other serious matters, is that people end up going along with whatever the majority wants to do. This collective nativity and de-sensitized state of consciousness is referred to by Tran as “*disimagination*.” She further adds that, “The implements of this *disimagination* machine are a set of cultural apparatuses –public pedagogies—that short-circuit the ability of individuals to think critically, imagine the unimaginable, and engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue, or put simply, to become critically engaged citizens of the world.”<sup>103</sup>

At a recent annual meeting of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the denomination decided by a unanimous vote to renounce the Manifest Destiny doctrine. This doctrine was devised by John Louis O’Sullivan, author of an article entitled, “Annexation” written in the 1800s in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. According to O’Sullivan, “It is our manifest destiny [white Americans] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”<sup>104</sup> The term manifest destiny originated in the 1840s. It expressed “the belief that it was Anglo-Saxon Americans’ providential mission to expand their civilization and institutions across the breadth of North America. This expansion would involve not merely territorial aggrandizement but the progress of

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<sup>102</sup> Tran, *Reset the Heart*, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Tran, *Reset the Heart*, 29 (emphasis Tran’s).

<sup>104</sup> John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no. 1 (July-August 1845): 5, <https://pdcrodas.webs.ull.es/anglo/OSullivanAnnexation.pdf>, 9.

liberty and individual economic opportunity as well.”<sup>105</sup> Manifest Destiny is paradigmatic of U.S. policy in the early years of its development. Renouncing it as a denomination was a big step toward addressing the deconstruction of the white hegemony that, still to this date, characterizes American domestic and foreign policy.

It is wonderful to belong to a denomination that has a heart to see the long-standing hegemonic paradigm of the dominant white culture that is so interwoven into its history changed. DOCs have a collective vision to create faith communities that promote an environment where intercultural competence is valued and that push us in the direction of intercultural and interreligious diversity. Our denomination is a major player in campaigns to sponsor and advocate for racial justice. DOCs are the only mainline denomination in America that names anti-racism and pro-reconciliation as integral objectives for all of its faith communities. As pointed out above, we are one of the only mainline denominations in America that promotes freedom of theology and inclusivism of a wide range of religious and theological beliefs. We recognize that what binds us together is our common belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and the love He established as the standard for His followers.

My church experience might sound progressive in many respects, but I realize that we still have a long way to go. Although as a member of other churches and in other arenas of my life, I have experienced the debilitating effects of racism, I believe that the white members of SPCC not only desire genuine multicultural fellowship, but also want to see a truly diverse leadership team. However, we all recognize that we have a long way go before our denomination and its congregations treat all members of the body of Christ with the mutual respect and love we all deserve. SPCC is making great strides and we are trail-blazers for our denomination. We hope

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<sup>105</sup> O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” 9.

that the findings of this research will inform other faith communities and encourage them to take the next step in authentic multicultural fellowship.

### **Praxis of Shared Power and Inclusiveness**

Each racial-ethnic group in our faith community will be represented on the Diversity Syndicate. Representation is not simply a matter of meeting a quota, but more importantly to grant genuine access to decision-making and ensure that all perspectives are considered in our planning and overall forecasting of activities for the church. The Diversity Syndicate will ensure all groups in our faith community have a seat at the table and a voice in church business.

Initially, each group will have one representative with one vote. However, by a unanimous consensus, the syndicate can increase the number of representatives for each racial-ethnic group by the same number. A unanimous syndicate vote can only increase the number of representatives for each group by one representative at a time to prevent any group from being outnumbered. The syndicate will not vote to increase the number of representatives per group when any group has not yet met the standing increase. If a group loses its representative, a new member from that racial-ethnic group can be added as soon as possible.

In addition to being a liaison between the church's resources for ministry and her or his racial-ethnic group, each syndicate representative will be charged with helping to discover ways that we can collectively pursue our common interests. The syndicate's primary roles will be to discover and promote innovative practices, polity, and liturgy that support our efforts to minister to a multicultural congregation and the pursuit of our common interests. The worship liturgy, announcements, praise songs, and praying, as well as all other church programs, ministries and activities will be communicated in the languages of our various racial-ethnic groups through materials prepared by syndicate representatives. The syndicate will always be looking for ways



to enhance intercultural communication and inclusion in all church affairs. My experience has been that the English-speaking groups are often unwilling to experience the discomfort of sitting through episodes in the church liturgy where information is transmitted in another language. Sometimes genuine community does hurt and requires us to be willing to experience awkwardness and uneasiness in order to promote and embody the love that distinguishes us from social groups and other fraternal organizations. hooks characterizes it this way, “There can be, and usually is, some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches.”<sup>106</sup>

Language is an integral part of intercultural competence education because of the value of communication. We will make every effort to explore ways we can use technology to facilitate cross-cultural communication. Consideration and sensitivity for differences in language is of maximum importance. Interaction between different racial-ethnic groups is increased when language is not a barrier. Presently, at SPCC we utilize 30 translation devices for our Chinese congregants. The addition has made it possible for our Mandarin speaking members to understand and follow the worship service message as well as other announcements and activities in real time and eliminates the stress of going back and forth through English/Mandarin dictionaries and other online translation applications. It is encouraging and beautiful to see our Chinese friends laugh when something funny is said from the podium and they make facial expressions that indicate understanding and appreciation for the message. The smiles on their faces indicate they feel included and valued, which contributes to their overall sense of well-being and fulfillment in the life of our faith community. It also makes them feel respected and accepted in their cultural identity. According to Smokowski and Bacallao,

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<sup>106</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 43.

Many authors [of research dealing with cultural adaptation] hypothesize a link between acculturation and social maladjustment, psychopathology, and substance abuse... assimilation theory assumes that the relationship between acculturation and health outcomes is positive and linear; that is, health improves as immigrants become more ‘Americanized.’ In contrast, alternation theory assumes a nonlinear, perhaps curvilinear, relationship wherein some acculturation is beneficial but the benefits decrease at higher levels of acculturation, especially when ethnic identity is left behind in favor of assimilation.”<sup>107</sup>

Many immigrants who want to become U.S. citizens imagine living in this country as bicultural persons who retain and value their culture of origin. Helping our immigrant population retain their cultural identity, while also acquiring the skills and knowledge that will help them adjust to living in a new country is a primarily focal point in intercultural competency praxis. The two authors add, “Acculturation stress results from coping with daily difficulties, conflicts, and strains experienced when individuals and families are trying to adjust to a new cultural system.”<sup>108</sup>

At SPCC, we recognize the value of retaining one’s identity in the process of acculturation. We also recognize that the process of becoming a U.S. citizen is a long drawn out process. Consequently, we want to support our faith community friends to reduce their stress. Smokowski and Bacallao also point out that, “The development of bicultural identity integration can be a long and strenuous process, but the resulting bicultural skills represent resilience in the face of acculturation stress and risk factors.”<sup>109</sup> Biculturalism is much harder to achieve than simply requiring that everyone adapt to the dominant culture. We not only believe that acculturation with loss of identity is averse to our immigrant population, but that it falls short of

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<sup>107</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 131.

<sup>108</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 186.

<sup>109</sup> Smokowski and Bacallao, *Becoming Bicultural*, 216.

the mandate given by Jesus to love our neighbor. Loving our neighbor is tantamount to accepting them as they are in their respective cultural identities.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The work of intercultural competence is complicated and long-term work. We must be willing use repeated measures and activities to explore changes in multicultural attitudes and knowledge. We must also be willing to identify factors that the members of our faith believe will influence change. The research used in this project has shown that multicultural attitudes and knowledge can change in a positive direction when our faith community is willing to do the hard work that is required for a paradigm shift. Change seems to be influenced by people who are willing to examine themselves, apply knowledge, appreciate differences, share leadership, and commit to the process. Intercultural competence requires dedication to life-altering experiences in culturally/ethnically diverse settings, programs in multicultural and bilingual education, and working together. To overcome the debilitating and counter-productive tendencies that prevent conditions necessary for a multicultural governance team, intercultural competence education must be intentional. We must be proactive to include all God's people at the table. Specifically, this project recommends that the following practices be instituted to achieve true equality and inclusion of all groups. The Diversity Syndicate is charged with:

- 1.) Giving voice to all groups within our faith community.
- 2.) Anticipating and meeting the needs of all groups within our faith community.
- 3.) Achieving synergy through diverse insights on common initiatives and interests.
- 4.) Empowering the marginalized and minority groups within our faith community.
- 5.) Becoming a catalyst for racial and ethnic justice within our faith community.

If the Diversity Syndicate is a success, SPCC will experience a genesis of something new and organic. Out of the crucible of authentic multicultural exchanges that have the potential to tear down walls and build bridges, we will see our faith community transformed by a deep and heartfelt love for our brothers and sisters from all walks of life and racial-ethnic groups. Never has there been a better time for the Church to continue to work towards a genuinely culturally integrated House of Prayer. It is incumbent upon the Church of the 21st century and beyond, to live out God's vision to see a "Great Multitude" standing before Him.<sup>110</sup> We must ever be mindful of the words of the prophet Isaiah, who reminds us that, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Revelation 7:9 (NIV).

<sup>111</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV).

## **Appendix A: Diversity Focus Groups**

### **Facilitator Role:**

The role of the facilitator is to gather information regarding each participant's understanding of the importance of cultural and cross-cultural competence (cultural fluency).

In a multicultural faith community, all members should feel included and represented in the life of the church, which promotes respect, a sense of belonging, trust, and empowerment.

Here are questions that were asked in the Focus Groups:

- Do you feel that your spiritual gifts, traits, characteristics, talents, experience and cultural background are valued to the leadership at SPCC.?
- Do you feel comfortable being yourself in church settings?
- To what extent do feel that you can disclose your whole identity to your church family?
- Do you feel like you can be yourself in worship and fellowship gatherings?
- Do you feel that you belong at SPCC? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that you are a valued and essential part of SPCC? Why or why not?
- Do you ever feel left out at church by church leadership— either when engaging in church activities or fellowship?
- Do you feel that you can trust the leadership team at SPCC? Why or why not?
- Are you able to elaborate on the importance of cultural diversity in leadership at SPCC?
- How do you get people to be honest and open about how they feel about cultural diversity?
- How would you define ethnic-racial equality?
- What characteristics, traits, contributions, and behaviors do you feel are most valued and rewarded at SPCC by its leadership team?
- Would you consider joining the leadership team at SPCC? Why or why not?

## **Appendix B: Diversity Leadership Observations**

Personal observation of what happens at church will assist greatly in helping to gauge and make fair assessments about our current state of cultural awareness and competence. Personal observation can provide an excellent opportunity to take note of what is working and what can we do better to improve the effectiveness of our leadership team. I was particularly interested in how our current leadership team (and the church's leadership model) reflect the make-up and represent the cultural diversity at SPCC. The ultimate question we asked ourselves was, "How can a culturally diverse leadership team at SPCC work to make sure all members and visitors feel valued, respected, and connected to the church family?"

### **The following questions helped to observers evaluate the current leadership team:**

1. Do they seem to understand their role on the leadership team at SPCC?
2. Does the team value each member and do they share ideas openly at the leadership team meetings?
3. How would you describe the current ethnic-racial mix of SPCC's leadership and what do you believe are our opportunities for improvement?
4. Did you observe any exemplary characteristics about individuals on the leadership team?
5. What can SPCC leadership team do to be more welcoming of cultural diversity?

## **Appendix C: Diversity Interviews**

Below are the interview questions that helped to discover how the members of SPCC understand cultural diversity. The questions are designed to gauge the importance of cultural diversity at SPCC and the present level of intercultural competence.

The following are questions used for the interviews:

1. Describe your understanding of cultural diversity and why it is important in the church.
2. In what ways do you think diversity is important in church leadership?
3. Have you observed any practices or liturgies at SPCC that are indifferent or offensive to our ethnic diversity?
4. How would you describe your current thinking about diversity, and how has your thinking changed over time?
5. What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity? How have you demonstrated that commitment, and how do you see yourself demonstrating it SPCC?
6. What are some concerns you have about the challenges facing SPCC with respect to its growing cultural diversity?
7. To what extent do you believe there are significant differences in how one interacts with diverse cultures in church and diverse cultures in the world? Are different strategies or power-dynamics appropriate, and if so, what are they?

## **Appendix D: Diversity Questionnaire**

These questions provided a broad view of SPCC's overall attitude toward cultural diversity, both in its leadership and its membership.

**Please circle one response for each statement.**

**1. The leadership at SPCC encourages diversity.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**2. Leadership at SPCC shows that diversity is important through its actions.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**3. SPCC is committed to diversity.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**4. SPCC respects individuals and values their differences.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree



Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**5. SPCC is making progress with including diversity at the table.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**6. An effective leadership team includes people from every group in the church.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**7. People who are different from the majority are treated fairly at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**8. At SPCC, members appreciate others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**9. I have personally witnessed discrimination at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**10. I have been the victim of discrimination at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**11. There is cultural diversity among the people a visitor will meet/see on his/her first visit to SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**12. Members of different backgrounds are encouraged to be a part of the leadership team.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**13. There is opportunity for involvement in the life of the church for all members at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**14. My experiences since coming to SPCC have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**15. Getting to know people with racial/ethnic backgrounds different from my own has been easy at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**16. SPCC's policies or procedures discourage discrimination.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**17. I believe SPCC will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**18. Members of different backgrounds interact well at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**19. Leadership at SPCC demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of members with disabilities.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**20. Members and visitors of different ages are valued equally at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**21. Racial, ethnic, and gender-based jokes are not tolerated at SPCC.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**22. SPCC provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**23. The pastor(s) is/are committed to, and supports, diversity.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**24. The pastor handles diversity matters satisfactorily.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**25. A culture of diversity will enhance SPCC presence in the community.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**26. SPCC has done a good job of encouraging everyone to participate in the life of the church.**

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

**27. What improvements, if any, can be made to improve the level of diversity at SPCC?**

**28. How long have you been a member at SPCC?**

Less than one year

One year to less than two years

Two years to less than five years

Five years to less than ten years

Ten years or more

**29. What is your age?**

Under 21

21 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 or older

**30. What is your gender?**

Male

Female

Other

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